John Dayman

1843-

1868

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA

PRESENTED BY
PROF. CHARLES A. KOFOID AND
MRS. PRUDENCE W. KOFOID

# PRINCIPLES

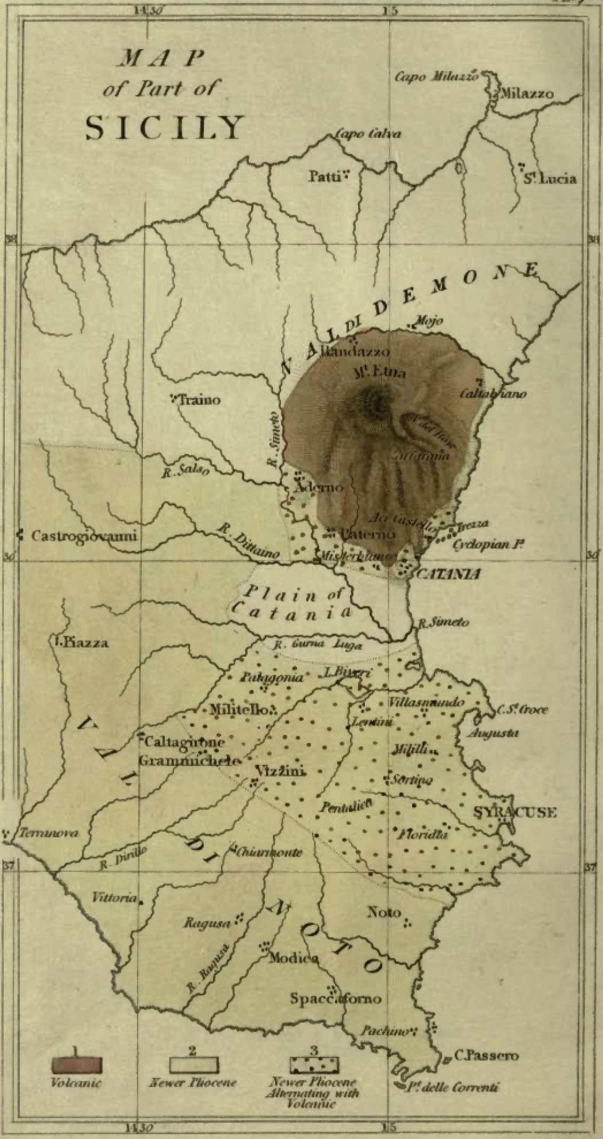
OF

# GEOLOGY.

VOL. III.

London:
Printed by A. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

PL. 7


MAP
of Part of
SICILY
14.30
15
38
30
37
Capo Milazzo
Milazzo
Capo Calva
Patti
St. Lucia
VAL DI DEMONE
Mojo
Randazzo
Mt. Etna
Caltabiano
V. del Bove
Catania
Traino
R. Simeto
R. Salso
Aderno
Aci Castello
Trezza
Cyclopian I.s
Castrogiovanni
R. Dittaino
Paterno
Misterbiano
CATANIA
Plain of Catania
R. Simeto
R. Gurna Luga
L. Piazza
Palagonia
L. Biveri
Villasmundo
C. St. Croce
Militello
Lentini
Augusta
Caltagirone
Grammichele
Vizzini
Melilli
Sortino
VAL DI NOTO
Pentalica
SYRACUSE
Floridia
Terranova
R. Dirillo
Chiaramonte
Vittoria
Noto
Ragusa
R. Ragusa
Modica
Spaccaforno
Pachino
C. Passero
Pt. delle Correnti
1
Volcanic
2
Newer Pliocene
3
Newer Pliocene Alternating with Volcanic

# PRINCIPLES

OF

# GEOLOGY:

BEING

AN INQUIRY HOW FAR THE FORMER CHANGES OF
THE EARTH'S SURFACE

ARE REFERABLE TO CAUSES NOW IN OPERATION.

BY

CHARLES LYELL, Esq. F.R.S.

PRESIDENT OF THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

---

"Verè scire est per causas scire." Bacon.

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1835.

QE26
L84
1835
v.3

# PRINCIPLES OF GEOLOGY.

## BOOK III.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WHETHER SPECIES HAVE A REAL EXISTENCE IN NATURE — *continued.*

Phenomena of hybrids — Hunter's opinions — Mules not strictly intermediate between parent species — Hybrid plants — Experiments of Kölreuter and Wiegmann — Vegetable hybrids prolific throughout several generations — Why rare in a wild state (p. 7.) — De Candolle on hybrid plants — The phenomena of hybrids confirm the distinctness of species — Theory of the gradation in the intelligence of animals as indicated by the facial angle (p. 15.) — Tiedemann on the brain of the fœtus in mammalia assuming successively the form of the brain of fish, reptile, and bird — Bearing of this discovery on the theory of progressive development and transmutation (p. 20.) — Recapitulation.

*Phenomena of hybrids.* — We have yet to consider another class of phenomena, those relating to the production of hybrids, which have been regarded in a very different light with reference to their bearing on the question of the permanent distinctness of species; some naturalists considering them as affording the strongest of all proofs in favour of the reality of species; others, on the contrary, appealing to them

M362303

as countenancing the opposite doctrine, that all the varieties of organization and instinct now exhibited in the animal and vegetable kingdoms may have been propagated from a small number of original types.

In regard to the mammifers and birds, it is found that no sexual union will take place between races which are remote from each other in their habits and organization; and it is only in species that are very nearly allied that such unions produce offspring. It may be laid down as a general rule, admitting of very few exceptions among quadrupeds, that the hybrid progeny is sterile, and there seem to be no well-authenticated examples of the continuance of the mule race beyond one generation. The principal number of observations and experiments relate to the mixed offspring of the horse and the ass; and in this case it is well established that the he-mule can generate, and the she-mule produce. Such cases occur in Spain and Italy, and much more frequently in the West Indies and New Holland; but these mules have never bred in cold climates, seldom in warm regions, and still more rarely in temperate countries.

The hybrid offspring of the she-ass and the stallion, the γιννος of Aristotle, and the hinnus of Pliny, differs from the mule, or the offspring of the ass and mare. In both cases, says Buffon, these animals retain more of the dam than of the sire, not only in the magnitude, but in the figure of the body; whereas, in the form of the head, limbs, and tail, they bear a greater resemblance to the sire. The same naturalist infers, from various experiments respecting cross-breeds between the he-goat and ewe, the dog and she-wolf, the goldfinch and canary-bird, that the male transmits his sex to the greatest number, and that the preponderance of males over females exceeds that which prevails where the parents are of the same species.

*Hunter's opinion.* — The celebrated John Hunter has observed, that the true distinction of species must ultimately be gathered from their incapacity of propagating with each other, and producing offspring, capable of again continuing itself. He was unwilling, however, to admit that the horse and the ass were of the same species, because some rare instances had been adduced of the breeding of mules, although he maintained that the wolf, the dog, and the jackal were all of one species; because he had found, by two experiments, that the dog would breed both with the wolf and the jackal; and that the mule, in each case, would breed again with the dog. In these cases, however, it may be observed, that there was always one parent at least of pure breed, and no proof was obtained that a true hybrid race could be perpetuated; a fact of which I believe no examples are yet recorded, either in regard to mixtures of the horse and ass, or any other of the mammalia.

Should the fact be hereafter ascertained, that two mules can propagate their kind, we must still inquire whether the offspring may not be regarded in the light of a monstrous birth, proceeding from some accidental cause, or, rather, to speak more philosophically, from some general law not yet understood, but which may not be permitted permanently to interfere with those laws of generation by which species may, in general, be prevented from becoming blended. If, for example, we discovered that the progeny of a mule race degenerated greatly, in the first generation, in force, sagacity, or any attribute necessary for its preservation in a state of nature, we might infer that, like a monster, it is a mere temporary and fortuitous variety. Nor does it seem probable that the greater number of such monsters could ever occur unless obtained by art; for, in Hunter's experiments, stratagem or force was, in most instances, employed to bring about the irregular connexion.*

*Mules not strictly intermediate between the parent species.* — It seems rarely to happen that the mule offspring is truly intermediate in character between the two parents. Thus Hunter mentions that, in his experiments, one of the hybrid pups resembled the wolf much more than the rest of the litter; and we are informed by Wiegmann, that, in a litter lately obtained in the Royal Menagerie at Berlin, from a white pointer and a she-wolf, two of the cubs resembled the common wolf-dog, but the third was like a pointer with hanging ears.

There is undoubtedly a very close analogy between these phenomena and those presented by the intermixture of distinct races of the same species, both in the inferior animals and in man. Dr. Prichard, in his "Physical History of Mankind," cites examples where the peculiarities of the parents have been transmitted very unequally to the offspring; as where children, entirely white, or perfectly black, have sprung from the union of the European and the negro. Sometimes the colour or other peculiarities of one parent, after having failed to show themselves in the immediate progeny, reappear in a subsequent generation; as where a white child is born of two black parents, the grandfather having been a white.†

---

* Phil. Trans., 1787. Additional Remarks, Phil. Trans., 1789.

† Prichard, vol. i. p. 217.

The same author judiciously observes that, if different species mixed their breed, and hybrid races were often propagated, the animal world would soon present a scene of confusion; its tribes would be everywhere blended together, and we should perhaps find more hybrid creatures than genuine and uncorrupted races.*

*Hybrid plants — Kölreuter's experiments.* — The history of the vegetable kingdom has been thought to afford more decisive evidence in favour of the theory of the formation of new and permanent species from hybrid stocks. The first accurate experiments in illustration of this curious subject appear to have been made by Kölreuter, who obtained a hybrid from two species of tobacco, *Nicotiana rustica* and *N. paniculata*, which differ greatly in the shape of their leaves, the colour of the corolla, and the height of the stem. The stigma of a female plant of *N. rustica* was impregnated with the pollen of a male plant of *N. paniculata*. The seed ripened, and produced a hybrid which was intermediate between the two parents, and which, like all the hybrids which this botanist brought up, had imperfect stamens. He afterwards impregnated this hybrid with the pollen of *N. paniculata*, and obtained plants which much more resembled the last. This he continued through several generations, until, by due perseverance, he actually changed the *Nicotiana rustica* into the *Nicotiana paniculata*.

The plan of impregnation adopted was the cutting off of the anthers of the plant intended for fructification before they had shed pollen, and then laying on foreign pollen upon the stigma.

*Wiegmann's experiments.* — The same experiment has since been repeated with success by Wiegmann, who found that he could bring back the hybrids to the exact likeness of either parent, by crossing them a sufficient number of times.

---

* Prichard, vol. i. p. 97.

The blending of the characters of the parent stocks, in many other of Wiegmann's experiments, was complete;. the colour and shape of the leaves and flowers, and even the scent, being intermediate, as in the offspring of the two species of verbascum. An intermarriage, also, between the common onion and the leek (*Allium cepa* and *A. porrum*) gave a mule plant, which, in the character of its leaves and flowers, approached most nearly to the garden onion, but had the elongated bulbous root and smell of the leek.

The same botanist remarks, that vegetable hybrids, when not strictly intermediate, more frequently approach the female than the male parent species, *but they never exhibit characters foreign to both.* A recross with one of the original stocks generally causes the mule plant to revert towards that stock; but this is not always the case, the offspring sometimes continuing to exhibit the character of a full hybrid.

In general, the success attending the production and perpetuity of hybrids among plants depends, as in the animal kingdom, on the degree of proximity between the species intermarried. If their organization be very remote, impregnation never takes place; if somewhat less distant, seeds are formed, but always imperfect and sterile. The next degree of relationship yields hybrid seedlings, but these are barren; and it is only when the parent species are very nearly allied that the hybrid race may be perpetuated for several generations. Even in this case, the best authenticated examples seem confined to the crossing of hybrids with individuals of pure breed. In none of the experiments most accurately detailed does it appear that both the parents were mules.

Wiegmann diversified as much as possible his mode of bringing about these irregular unions among plants. He often sowed parallel rows, near to each other, of the species from which he desired to breed; and, instead of mutilating, after Kölreuter's fashion, the plants of one of the parent stocks, he merely washed the pollen off their anthers. The branches of the plants in each row were then gently bent towards each other and intertwined; so that the wind, and numerous insects, as they passed from the flowers of one to those of the other species, carried the pollen and produced fecundation.

*Vegetable hybrids why rare in a wild state.* — The same observer saw a good exemplification of the manner in which hybrids may be formed in a state of nature. Some wallflowers and pinks had been growing in a garden, in a dry sunny situation; and their stigmas had been ripened so as to be moist, and to absorb pollen with avidity, although their anthers were not yet developed. These stigmas became impregnated by pollen blown from some other adjacent plants of the same species; but, had they been of different species, and not too remote in their organization, mule races must have resulted.

When, indeed, we consider how busily some insects have been shown to be engaged in conveying anther-dust from flower to flower, especially bees, flower-eating beetles, and the like, it seems a most enigmatical problem how it can happen that promiscuous alliances between distinct species are not perpetually occurring.

How continually do we observe the bees diligently employed in collecting the red and yellow powder by which the stamens of flowers are covered, loading it on their hind legs, and carrying it to their hive for the purpose of feeding their young! In thus providing for their own progeny, these insects assist materially the process of fructification.* Few persons need be reminded that the stamens in certain plants grow on different blossoms from the pistils; and, unless the summit of the pistil be touched with the fertilizing dust, the fruit does not swell, nor the seed arrive at maturity. It is by the help of bees, chiefly, that the development of the fruit of many such species is secured, the powder which they have collected from the stamens being unconsciously left by them in visiting the pistils.

How often, during the heat of a summer's day, do we see the males of diœcious plants, such as the yew-tree, standing separate from the females, and sending off into the air, upon the slightest breath of wind, clouds of buoyant pollen! That the zephyr should so rarely intervene to fecundate the plants of one species with the anther-dust of others, seems almost to realize the converse of the miracle believed by the credulous herdsmen of the Lusitanian mares —

> Ore omnes versæ in Zephyrum, stant rupibus altis,
> Exceptantque leves auras: et sæpe sine ullis
> Conjugiis, vento gravidæ, mirabile dictu.†

But, in the first place, it appears that there is a natural aversion in plants, as well as in animals, to irregular sexual unions; and in most of the successful experiments in the animal and vegetable world, some violence has been used in order to procure impregnation. The stigma imbibes, slowly and reluctantly, the granules of the pollen of another species, even when it is abundantly covered with it; and if it happen that, during this period, ever so slight a quantity of the anther-dust of its own species alight upon it, this is instantly absorbed, and the effect of the foreign pollen destroyed. Besides, it does not often happen that the male and female organs of fructification, in different species, arrive at a state of maturity at precisely the same time. Even where such synchronism does prevail, so that a cross impregnation is effected, the chances are very numerous against the establishment of a hybrid race.

---

* See Barton on the Geography of Plants, p. 67.

† Georg. lib. iii. 273.

If we consider the vegetable kingdom generally, it must be recollected that even of the seeds which are well ripened, a great part are either eaten by insects, birds, and other animals, or decay for want of room and opportunity to germinate. Unhealthy plants are the first which are cut off by causes prejudicial to the species, being usually stifled by more vigorous individuals of their own kind. If, therefore, the relative fecundity or hardiness of hybrids be in the least degree inferior, they cannot maintain their footing for many generations, even if they were ever produced beyond one generation in a wild state. In the universal struggle for existence, the right of the strongest eventually prevails; and the strength and durability of a race depends mainly on its prolificness, in which hybrids are acknowledged to be deficient.

*Centaurea hybrida*, a plant which never bears seed, and is supposed to be produced by the frequent intermixture of two well-known species of Centaurea, grows wild upon a hill near Turin. *Ranunculus lacerus,* also sterile, has been produced accidentally at Grenoble, and near Paris, by the union of two Ranunculi; but this occurred in gardens.*

*Mr. Herbert's experiments.* — Mr. Herbert, in one of his ingenious papers on mule plants, endeavours to account for their non-occurrence in a state of nature, from the circumstance that all the combinations that were likely to occur have already been made many centuries ago, and have formed the various species of botanists; but in our gardens, he says, whenever species, having a certain degree of affinity to each other, are transported from different countries, and brought for the first time into contact, they give rise to hybrid species.† But we have no data, as yet, to warrant the conclusion, that a single permanent hybrid race has ever been formed, even in gardens, by the intermarriage of two allied species brought from distant habitations. Until some fact of this kind is fairly established, and a new species, capable of perpetuating itself in a state of perfect independence of man, can be pointed out, it seems reasonable to call in question entirely this hypothetical source of new species. That varieties do sometimes spring up from cross breeds, in a natural way, can hardly be doubted; but they probably die out even more rapidly than races propagated by grafts or layers.

*Opinion of De Candolle.* — De Candolle, whose opinion on a philosophical question of this kind deserves the greatest attention, has observed, in his Essay on Botanical Geography, that the *varieties* of plants range themselves under two general heads: those produced by external circumstances, and those formed by hybridity. After adducing various arguments to show that neither of these causes can explain the permanent diversity of plants indigenous in different regions, he says, in regard to the crossing of races, "I can perfectly comprehend, without altogether sharing the opinion, that, where many species of the same genera occur near together, hybrid species may be formed, and I am aware that the great number of species of certain genera which are found in particular regions may be explained in this manner; but I am unable to conceive how any one can regard the same explanation as applicable to species which live naturally at great distances. If the three larches, for example, now known in the world, lived in the same localities, I might then believe that one of them was the produce of the crossing of the two others; but I never could admit that the Siberian species has been produced by the crossing of those of Europe and America. I see, then, that there exist, in organized beings, permanent differences which cannot be referred to any one of the actual causes of variation, and these differences are what constitute *species*." *

---

* Hon. and Rev. W. Herbert, Hort. Trans., vol. iv. p. 41.

† Ibid.

*Reality of species confirmed by the phenomena of hybrids.* — The most decisive arguments, perhaps, amongst many others, against the probability of the derivation of permanent species from cross-breeds, are to be drawn from the fact alluded to by De Candolle, of species having a close affinity to each other occurring in distinct botanical provinces, or countries inhabited by groups of distinct species of indigenous plants: for in this case naturalists who are not prepared to go the whole length of the transmutationists, are under the necessity of admitting that, in some cases, species which approach very near to each other in their characters, were so created from their origin; an admission fatal to the idea of its being a general law of nature, that a few original types only should be formed, and that all intermediate races should spring from the intermixture of those stocks.

---

* Essai Elémentaire, &c., 3me partie.

This notion, indeed, is wholly at variance with all that we know of hybrid generation; for the phenomena entitle us to affirm, that had the types been at first somewhat distant, *no cross-breeds would ever have been produced*, much less those prolific races which we now recognize as distinct species.

In regard, moreover, to the permanent propagation of hybrid races among animals, insuperable difficulties present themselves, when we endeavour to conceive the blending together of the different instincts and propensities of two species, so as to insure the preservation of the intermediate race. The common mule, when obtained by human art, may be protected by the power of man; but, in a wild state, it would not have precisely the same wants either as the horse or the ass: and if, in consequence of some difference of this kind, it strayed from the herd, it would soon be hunted down by beasts of prey, and destroyed.

If we take some genus of insects, such as the bee, we find that each of the numerous species has some difference in its habits, its mode of collecting honey, or constructing its dwelling, or providing for its young, and other particulars. In the case of the common hive-bee, the workers are described, by Kirby and Spence, as being endowed with no less than thirty distinct instincts.* So also we find that, amongst a most numerous class of spiders, there are nearly as many different modes of spinning their webs as there are species. When we recollect how complicated are the relations of these instincts with co-existing species, both of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, it is scarcely possible to imagine that a bastard race could spring from the union of two of these species, and retain just so much of the qualities of each parent stock as to preserve its ground in spite of the dangers which surround it.

We might also ask, if a few generic types alone have been *created* among insects, and the intermediate species have proceeded from hybridity, where are those original types, combining, as they ought to do, the elements of all the instincts which have made their appearance in the numerous derivative races? So also in regard to animals of all classes, and of plants; if species in general are of hybrid origin, where are the stocks which combine in themselves the habits, properties, and organs, of which all the intervening species ought to afford us mere modifications?

*Recapitulation of the arguments from hybrids.* — I shall now conclude this subject by summing up, in a few words, the results to which I have been led by the consideration of the phenomena of hybrids. It appears, that the aversion of individuals of distinct species to the sexual union is common to animals and plants; and that it is only when the species approach near to each other in their organization and habits, that any offspring are produced from their connexion. Mules are of extremely rare occurrence in a state of nature, and no examples are yet known of their having procreated in a wild state. But it has been proved, that hybrids are not universally sterile, provided the parent stocks have a near affinity to each other, although the continuation of the mixed race, for several generations, appears hitherto to have been obtained only by crossing the hybrids with individuals of pure species; an experiment which by no means bears out the hypothesis that a true hybrid race could ever be permanently established.

---

* Intr. to Entom., vol. ii., p. 504. Ed. 1817.

Hence we may infer, that aversion to sexual intercourse is, in general, a good test of the distinctness of original stocks, or of *species;* and the procreation of hybrids is a proof of the very near affinity of species. Perhaps, hereafter, the number of generations for which hybrids may be continued, before the race dies out (for it seems usually to degenerate rapidly), may afford the zoologist and botanist an experimental test of the difference in the degree of affinity of allied species.

I may also remark, that if it could have been shown that a single permanent species had ever been produced by hybridity (of which there is no satisfactory proof), it might certainly have lent some countenance to the notions of the ancients respecting the gradual deterioration of created things, but none whatever to Lamarck's theory of their progressive perfectibility; for observations have hitherto shown that there is a tendency in mule animals and plants to degenerate in organization.

It was before remarked, that the theory of progressive development arose from an attempt to ingraft the doctrines of the transmutationists upon one of the most popular generalizations in geology. But modern geological researches have almost destroyed every appearance of that gradation in the successive groups of animate beings, which was supposed to indicate the slow progress of the organic world from the more simple to the more compound structure. In the more modern formations, we find clear indications that the highest orders of the terrestrial mammalia were fully represented during several successive epochs; but in the monuments which we have hitherto examined of more remote eras, in which there are as yet discovered few fluviatile, and perhaps no lacustrine formations, and, therefore, scarcely any means of obtaining an insight into the zoology of the continents then existing, we have only as yet found one example of a mammiferous quadruped. The recent origin of man, and the absence of all signs of any rational being holding an analogous relation to former states of the animate world, affords one, and the only reasonable argument, in support of the hypothesis of a progressive scheme; but none whatever in favour of the fancied evolution of one species out of another.

*Theory of the gradation in intellect as shown by the facial angle.*—When the celebrated anatomist, Camper, first attempted to estimate the degrees of sagacity of different animals, and of the races of man, by the measurement of the facial angle, some speculators were bold enough to affirm, that certain simiæ differed as little from the more savage races of men, as these do from the human race in general; and that a scale might be traced from "apes with foreheads villanous low" to the African variety of the human species, and from that to the European. The facial angle was measured by drawing a line from the prominent centre of the forehead to the most advanced part of the lower jaw-bone, and observing the angle which it made with the horizontal line; and it was affirmed, that there was a regular series of such angles from birds to the mammalia.

The gradation from the dog to the monkey was said to be perfect, and from that again to man. One of the ape tribe has a facial angle of 42° ; and another, which approximated nearest to man in figure, an angle of 50°. To this succeeds (longo sed proximus intervallo) the head of the African negro, which, as well as that of the Kalmuc, forms an angle of 70°; while that of the European contains 80°. The Roman painters preferred the angle of 95°; and the character of beauty and sublimity, so striking in some works of Grecian sculpture, as in the head of the Apollo, and in the Medusa of Sisocles, is given by an angle which amounts to 100°.*

A great number of valuable facts and curious analogies in comparative anatomy were brought to light during the investigations which were made by Camper, John Hunter, and others, to illustrate this scale of organization; and their facts and generalizations must not be confounded with the fanciful systems which White and others deduced from them.†

That there is some connexion between an elevated and capacious forehead, in certain races of men, and a large development of the intellectual faculties, seems highly probable; and that a low facial angle is frequently accompanied with inferiority of mental powers, is certain; but the attempt to trace a graduated scale of intelligence through the different species of animals accompanying the modifications of the form of the skull, is a mere visionary speculation. It has been found necessary to exaggerate the sagacity of the ape tribe at the expense of the dog; and strange contradictions have arisen in the conclusions deduced from the structure of the elephant; some anatomists being disposed to deny the quadruped the intelligence which he really possesses, because they found that the volume of his brain was small in comparison to that of the other mammalia; while others were inclined to magnify extravagantly the superiority of his intellect, because the vertical height of his skull is so great when compared to its horizontal length.

---

* Prichard's Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 159.

† Ch. White on the Regular Gradation in Man, &c., 1799.

*Different races of men are all of one species.*—It would be irrelevant to our subject if we were to enter into a farther discussion on these topics; because, even if a graduated scale of organization and intelligence could have been established, it would prove nothing in favour of a tendency, in each species, to attain a higher state of perfection. I may refer the reader to the writings of Blumenbach, Prichard, Lawrence, and others, for convincing proofs that the varieties of form, colour, and organization of different races of men, are perfectly consistent with the generally received opinion, that all the individuals of the species have originated from a single pair; and, while they exhibit in man as many diversities of a physiological nature as appear in any other species, they confirm also the opinion of the slight deviation from a common standard of which species are capable.

The power of existing and multiplying in every latitude, and in every variety of situation and climate, which has enabled the great human family to extend itself over the habitable globe, is partly, says Lawrence, the result of physical constitution, and partly of the mental prerogative of man. If he did not possess the most enduring and flexible corporeal frame, his arts would not enable him to be the inhabitant of all climates, and to brave the extremes of heat and cold, and the other destructive influences of local situation.* Yet, notwithstanding this flexibility of bodily frame, we find no signs of indefinite departure from a common standard, and the intermarriages of individuals of the most remote varieties are not less fruitful than between those of the same tribe.

*Tiedemann on the brain of the fœtus in vertebrated animals.*—There is yet another department of anatomical discovery to which I must allude, because it has appeared, to some persons, to afford a distant analogy, at least, to that progressive development by which some of the inferior species may have been gradually perfected into those of more complex organization. Tiedemann found, and his discoveries have been most fully confirmed and elucidated by M. Serres, that the brain of the fœtus, in the highest class of vertebrated animals, assumes, in succession, forms analogous to those which belong to fishes, reptiles, and birds, before it acquires the additions and modifications which are peculiar to the mammiferous tribe. So that, in the passage from the embryo to the perfect mammifer, there is a typical representation, as it were, of all those transformations which the primitive species are supposed to have undergone, during a long series of generations, between the present period and the remotest geological era.

---

* Lawrence, Lectures on Phys. Zool. and Nat. Hist. of Man, p. 192. Ed. 1823.

If you examine the brain of the mammalia, says M. Serres, at an early stage of uterine life, you perceive the cerebral hemispheres consolidated, as in fish, in two vesicles, isolated one from the other; at a later period, you see them affect the configuration of the cerebral hemispheres of reptiles; still later again, they present you with the forms of those of birds; finally, they acquire, at the era of birth, and sometimes later, the permanent forms which the adult mammalia present.

The cerebral hemispheres, then, arrive at the state which we observe in the higher animals only by a series of successive metamorphoses. If we reduce the whole of these evolutions to four periods, we shall see, that in the first are born the cerebral lobes of fishes; and this takes place homogeneously in all classes. The second period will give us the organization of reptiles; the third, the brain of birds; and the fourth, the complex hemispheres of mammalia.

If we could develop the different parts of the brain of the inferior classes, we should make, in succession, a reptile out of a fish, a bird out of a reptile, and a mammiferous quadruped out of a bird. If, on the contrary, we could starve this organ in the mammalia, we might reduce it successively to the condition of the brain of the three inferior classes.

Nature often presents us with this last phenomenon in monsters, but never exhibits the first. Among the various deformities which organized beings may experience, they never pass the limits of their own classes to put on the forms of the class above them. Never does a fish elevate itself so as to assume the form of the brain of a reptile; nor does the latter ever attain that of birds; nor the bird that of the mammifer.

It may happen that a monster may have two heads; but the conformation of the brain always remains circumscribed narrowly within the limits of its class.*

*Bearing of these discoveries on the theory of progressive development.* — It will be observed, that these curious phenomena disclose, in a highly interesting manner, the unity of plan that runs through the organization of the whole series of vertebrated animals; but they lend no support whatever to the notion of a gradual transmutation of one species into another; least of all of the passage, in the course of many generations, from an animal of a more simple to one of a more complex structure. On the contrary, were it not for the sterility imposed on monsters, as well as on hybrids in general, the argument to be derived from Tiedemann's discovery, like that deducible from experiments respecting hybridity, would be in favour of the successive *degeneracy*, rather than the perfectibility, in the course of ages, of certain classes of organic beings.

*Recapitulation.* — For the reasons, therefore, detailed in this and the two preceding chapters, we may draw the following inferences in regard to the reality of *species* in nature: —

1st. That there is a capacity in all species to accommodate themselves, to a certain extent, to a change of external circumstances, this extent varying greatly, according to the species.

2dly. When the change of situation which they can endure is great, it is usually attended by some modifications of the form, colour, size, structure, or other particulars; but the mutations thus superinduced are governed by constant laws, and the capability of so varying forms part of the permanent specific character.

---

* E. R. A. Serres, Anatomie Comparée du Cerveau, illustrated by numerous plates, tome i., 1824.

3dly. Some acquired peculiarities of form, structure, and instinct, are transmissible to the offspring; but these consist of such qualities and attributes only as are intimately related to the natural wants and propensities of the species.

4thly. The entire variation from the original type, which any given kind of change can produce, may usually be effected in a brief period of time, after which no farther deviation can be obtained by continuing to alter the circumstances, though ever so gradually; indefinite divergence, either in the way of improvement or deterioration, being prevented, and the least possible excess beyond the defined limits being fatal to the existence of the individual.

5thly. The intermixture of distinct species is guarded against by the aversion of the individuals composing them to sexual union, or by the sterility of the mule offspring. It does not appear that true hybrid races have ever been perpetuated for several generations, even by the assistance of man; for the cases usually cited relate to the crossing of mules with individuals of pure species, and not to the intermixture of hybrid with hybrid.

6thly. From the above considerations, it appears that species have a real existence in nature; and that each was endowed, at the time of its creation, with the attributes and organization by which it is now distinguished.

# CHAPTER V.

## LAWS WHICH REGULATE THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIES.

Analogy of climate not attended with identity of species — Botanical geography — Stations — Habitations — Distinct provinces of indigenous plants — Vegetation of islands — Marine vegetation (p. 29.) — In what manner plants become diffused — Effects of wind, rivers, marine currents — Agency of animals (p. 38.) — Many seeds pass through the stomachs of animals and birds undigested — Agency of man in the dispersion of plants, both voluntary and involuntary (p. 42.) — Its analogy to that of the inferior animals.

Next to determining the question whether species have a real existence, the consideration of the laws which regulate their geographical distribution is a subject of primary importance to the geologist. It is only by studying these laws with attention, by observing the positions which groups of species occupy at present, and inquiring how these may be varied in the course of time by migrations, by changes in physical geography, and other causes, that we can hope to learn whether the duration of species be limited, or in what manner the state of the animate world is affected by the endless vicissitudes of the inanimate.

*Different regions inhabited by distinct species.*—That different regions of the globe are inhabited by entirely distinct animals and plants, is a fact which has been familiar to all naturalists since Buffon first pointed out the want of *specific* identity between the land quadrupeds of America and those of the Old World. The same phenomenon has, in later times, been forced in a striking manner upon our attention, by the examination of New Holland, where the indigenous species of animals and plants were found to be, almost without exception, distinct from those known in other parts of the world.

But the extent of this parcelling out of the globe amongst different *nations*, as they have been termed, of plants and animals—the universality of a phenomenon so extraordinary and unexpected, may be considered as one of the most interesting facts clearly established by the advance of modern science.

Scarcely fourteen hundred species of plants appear to have been known and described by the Greeks, Romans, and Arabians. At present, more than three thousand species are enumerated, as natives of our own island.* In other parts of the world there have been collected, perhaps, upwards of seventy thousand species. It was not to be supposed, therefore, that the ancients should have acquired any correct notions respecting what may be called the geography of plants, although the influence of climate on the character of the vegetation could hardly have escaped their observation.

Antecedently to investigation, there was no reason for presuming that the vegetable productions, growing wild in the eastern hemisphere, should be unlike those of the western, in the same latitude; nor that the plants of the Cape of Good Hope should be unlike those of the South of Europe; situations where the climate is little dissimilar. The contrary supposition would have seemed more probable, and we might have anticipated an almost perfect identity in the animals and plants which inhabit corresponding parallels of latitude. The discovery therefore, that each separate region of the globe, both of the land and water, is occupied by distinct groups of species, and that most of the exceptions to this general rule may be referred to disseminating causes now in operation, is eminently calculated to excite curiosity, and to stimulate us to seek some hypothesis respecting the first introduction of species which may be reconcileable with such phenomena.

---

* Barton's Lectures on the Geography of Plants, p. 2.

*Botanical geography.*—A comparison of the *plants* of different regions of the globe affords results more to be depended upon in the present state of our knowledge than those relating to the animal kingdom, because the science of botany is more advanced, and probably comprehends a great proportion of the total number of the vegetable productions of the whole earth. Humboldt, in several eloquent passages of his Personal Narrative, was among the first to promulgate philosophical views on this subject. Every hemisphere, says this traveller, produces plants of different species; and it is not by the diversity of climates that we can attempt to explain why equinoctial Africa has no lauriniæ, and the New World no heaths; why the calceolariæ are found only in the southern hemisphere; why the birds of the continent of India glow with colours less splendid than the birds of the hot parts of America; finally, why the tiger is peculiar to Asia, and the ornithorhynchus to New Holland.*

"We can conceive," he adds, "that a small number of the families of plants, for instance, the musaceæ and the palms, cannot belong to very cold regions, on account of their internal structure and the importance of certain organs; but we cannot explain why no one of the family of melastomas vegetates north of the parallel of thirty degrees; or why no rose-tree belongs to the southern hemisphere. Analogy of climates is often found in the two continents without identity of productions."[*]

---

* Pers. Nar., vol. v., p. 180.

The luminous essay of De Candolle on "Botanical Geography" presents us with the fruits of his own researches and those of Humboldt, Brown, and other eminent botanists, so arranged, that the principal phenomena of the distribution of plants are exhibited in connexion with the causes to which they are chiefly referrible.[†] "It might not, perhaps, be difficult," observes this writer, "to find two points, in the United States and in Europe, or in equinoctial America and Africa, which present all the same circumstances: as for example, the same temperature, the same height above the sea, a similar soil, an equal dose of humidity; yet nearly all, *perhaps all*, the plants in these two similar localities shall be distinct. A certain degree of analogy, indeed, of aspect, and even of structure, might very possibly be discoverable between the plants of the two localities in question; but the *species* would in general be different. Circumstances, therefore, different from those which now determine the *stations*, have had an influence on the *habitations* of plants."

*Stations and habitations of plants.* — As I shall frequently have occasion to speak of the *stations* and *habitations* of plants in the technical sense in which the terms are used in the above passage, I may remind the geologist that station indicates the peculiar nature of the locality where each species is accustomed to grow, and has reference to climate, soil, humidity, light, elevation above the sea, and other analogous circumstances; whereas, by habitation is meant a general indication of the country where a plant grows wild. Thus the *station* of a plant may be a salt-marsh, in a temperate climate, a hill-side, the bed of the sea, or a stagnant pool. Its *habitation* may be Europe, North America, or New Holland between the tropics. The stúdy of stations has been styled the topography, that of habitations the geography, of botany. The terms thus defined, express each a distinct class of ideas, which have been often confounded together, and which are equally applicable in zoology.

---

[*] Pers. Nar., vol. v. p. 180.

[†] Essai Elémentaire de Géographie Botanique. Extrait du 18me vol. du Dict. des Sci. Nat.

In further illustration of the principle above alluded to, that difference of longitude, independently of any influence of temperature, is accompanied by a great, and sometimes a complete diversity in the species of plants, De Candolle observes, that, out of 2891 species of phænogamous plants described by Pursh, in the United States, there are only 385 which are found in northern or temperate Europe. MM. Humboldt and Bonpland, in all their travels through equinoctial America, found only twenty-four species (these being all cyperacea and graminea) common to America and any part of the Old World. On comparing New Holland with Europe, Mr. Brown ascertained that, out of 4100 species, discovered in Australia, there were only 166 common to Europe, and of this small number there were some few which may have been transported thither by man.

But it is still more remarkable, that in the more widely separated parts of the ancient continent, notwithstanding the existence of an uninterrupted land-communication, the diversity in the specific character of the respective vegetations is almost as striking. Thus there is found one assemblage of species in China, another in the countries bordering the Black Sea and the Caspian, a third in those surrounding the Mediterranean, a fourth in the great platforms of Siberia and Tartary, and so forth.

The distinctness of the groups of indigenous plants, in the same parallel of latitude, is greatest where continents are disjoined by a wide expanse of ocean. In the northern hemisphere, near the pole, where the extremities of Europe, Asia, and America unite or approach near to one another, a considerable number of the same species of plants are found, common to the three continents. But it has been remarked, that these plants, which are thus so widely diffused in the Arctic regions, are also found in the chain of the Aleutian islands, which stretch almost across from America to Asia, and which may probably have served as the channel of communication for the partial blending of the Floras of the adjoining regions. It has, indeed, been found to be a general rule, that plants found at two points very remote from each other, occur also in places intermediate.

*Vegetation of islands.* — In islands very distant from continents the total number of plants is comparatively small; but a large proportion of the species are such as occur nowhere else. In so far as the Flora of such islands is not peculiar to them, it contains, in general, species common to the nearest main lands.*

---

* Prichard, vol. i. p. 36. Brown, Appendix to Flinders.

The islands of the great southern ocean exemplify these rules; the easternmost containing more American, and the western more Indian plants.* Madeira and Teneriffe contain many species, and even entire genera, peculiar to them; but they have also plants in common with Portugal, Spain, the Azores, and the north-west coast of Africa.†

In the Canaries, out of 533 species of phænogamous plants, it is said that 310 are peculiar to these islands, and the rest identical with those of the African continent; but in the Flora of St. Helena, which is so far distant even from the western shores of Africa, there have been found, out of sixty-one native species, only *two or three* which are to be found in any other part of the globe.

*Number of botanical provinces.* — De Candolle has enumerated twenty great botanical provinces inhabited by indigenous or aboriginal plants; and although many of these contain a variety of species which are common to several others, and sometimes to places very remote, yet the lines of demarcation are, upon the whole, astonishingly well defined.‡ Nor is it likely that the bearing of the evidence on which these general views are founded will ever be materially affected, since they are already confirmed by the examination of seventy or eighty thousand species of plants.

The entire change of opinion which the contemplation of these phenomena has brought about is worthy of remark. The first travellers were persuaded that they should find, in distant regions, the plants of their own country, and they took a pleasure in giving them the same names. It was some time before this illusion was dissipated; but so fully sensible did botanists at last become of the extreme smallness of the number of phænogamous plants common to different continents, that the ancient Floras fell into disrepute. All grew diffident of the pretended identifications; and we now find that every naturalist is inclined to examine each supposed exception with scrupulous severity.* If they admit the fact, they begin to speculate on the mode whereby the seeds may have been transported from one country into the other, or inquire on which of two continents the plant was indigenous, assuming that a species, like an individual, cannot have two birthplaces.

---

* Forster, Observations, &c.

† Humboldt, Pers. Nar., vol. i. p. 270. of the translation. Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 37.

‡ See a farther subdivision, by which twenty-seven provinces are made, by M. Alph. De Candolle, son of De Candolle. Monogr. des Campanulées. Paris, 1830.

*Marine vegetation.* — The marine vegetation is less known; but we learn from Lamouroux, that it is divisible into different systems, apparently as distinct as those on the land, notwithstanding that the uniformity of temperature is so much greater in the ocean. For on that ground we might have expected the phenomenon of partial distribution to have been far less striking, since climate is, in general, so influential a cause in checking the dispersion of species from one zone to another.

The number of hydrophytes, as they are termed, is very considerable, and their stations are found to be infinitely more varied than could have been anticipated; for while some plants are covered and uncovered daily by the tide, others live in abysses of the ocean, at the extraordinary depth of one thousand feet: and although in such situations there must reign darkness more profound than night, at least to our organs, many of these vegetables are highly coloured. From the analogy of terrestrial plants we might have inferred, that the colouring of the algæ was derived from the influence of the solar rays; yet we are compelled to doubt when we reflect how feeble must be the rays which penetrate to these great depths.

---

* De Candolle, Essai Elémen. de Géog. Botan., p. 45.

The subaqueous vegetation of the Mediterranean is, upon the whole, distinct from that of the Atlantic on the west, and that part of the Arabian gulf which is immediately contiguous on the south. Other botanical provinces are found in the West Indian seas, including the gulf of Mexico; in the ocean which washes the shores of South America; in the Indian Ocean and its gulfs; in the seas of Australia; and in the Atlantic basin, from the 40th degree of north latitude to the pole. There are very few species common to the coast of Europe and the United States of North America, and none common to the Straits of Magellan and the shores of Van Diemen's Land.

It must not be overlooked, that the distinctness alluded to between the vegetation of these several countries relates strictly to *species*, and not to forms. In regard to the numerical preponderance of certain forms, and many peculiarities of internal structure, there is a marked agreement in the vegetable productions of districts placed in corresponding latitudes, and under similar physical circumstances, however remote their position. Thus there are innumerable points of analogy between the vegetation of the Brazils, equinoctial Africa, and India; and there are also points of difference wherein the plants of these regions are distinguishable from all extra-tropical groups. But there are very few species common to the three continents. The same may be said, if we compare the plants of the Straits of Magellan with those of Van Diemen's Land, or the vegetation of the United States with that of the middle of Europe: the species are distinct, but the forms are in a great degree analogous.

Let us now consider what means of diffusion, independently of the agency of man, are possessed by plants, whereby, in the course of ages, they may be enabled to stray from one of the botanical provinces above mentioned to another, and to establish new colonies at a great distance from their birth-place.

*Manner in which plants become diffused.— Winds.—* The principal of the inanimate agents provided by nature for scattering the seeds of plants over the globe, are the movements of the atmosphere and of the ocean, and the constant flow of water from the mountains to the sea. To begin with the winds: a great number of seeds are furnished with downy and feathery appendages, enabling them, when ripe, to float in the air, and to be wafted easily to great distances by the most gentle breeze. Other plants are fitted for dispersion by means of an attached wing, as in the case of the fir-tree, so that they are caught up by the wind as they fall from the cone, and are carried to a distance. Amongst the comparatively small number of plants known to Linnæus, no less than 138 genera are enumerated as having winged seeds.

As winds often prevail for days, weeks, or even months together, in the same direction, these means of transportation may sometimes be without limits; and even the heavier grains may be borne through considerable spaces, in a very short time, during ordinary tempests; for strong gales, which can sweep along grains of sand, often move at the rate of about forty miles an hour, and if the storm be very violent, at the rate of fifty-six miles.* The hurricanes of tropical regions, which root up trees and throw down buildings, sweep along at the rate of ninety miles an hour; so that, for however short a time they prevail, they may carry even the heavier fruits and seeds over friths and seas of considerable width, and doubtless, are often the means of introducing into islands the vegetation of adjoining continents. Whirlwinds are also instrumental in bearing along heavy vegetable substances to considerable distances. Slight ones may frequently be observed in our fields, in summer, carrying up haycocks into the air, and then letting fall small tufts of hay far and wide over the country; but they are sometimes so powerful as to dry up lakes and ponds, and to break off the boughs of trees, and carry them up in a whirling column of air.

Franklin tells us, in one of his letters, that he saw, in Maryland, a whirlwind which began by taking up the dust which lay in the road, in the form of a sugar-loaf with the pointed end downwards, and soon after grew to the height of forty or fifty feet, being twenty or thirty in diameter. It advanced in a direction contrary to the wind; and although the rotatory motion of the column was surprisingly rapid, its onward progress was sufficiently slow to allow a man to keep pace with it on foot. Franklin followed it on horseback, accompanied by his son, for three-quarters of a mile, and saw it enter a wood, where it twisted and turned round large trees with surprising force. These were carried up in a spiral line, and were seen flying in the air, together with boughs and innumerable leaves, which, from their height, appeared reduced to the apparent size of flies. As this cause operates at different intervals of time throughout a great portion of the earth's surface, it may be the means of bearing not only plants but insects, land-testacea and their eggs, with many other species of animals, to points which they could never otherwise have reached, and from which they may then begin to propagate themselves again as from a new centre.

---

* Annuaire du Bureau des Longitudes.

*Distribution of cryptogamous plants.* — It has been found that a great numerical proportion of the exceptions to the limitation of species to certain quarters of the globe, occur in the various tribes of cryptogamic plants. Linnæus observed that, as the germs of plants of this class, such as mosses, fungi, and lichens, consist of an impalpable powder, the particles of which are scarcely visible to the naked eye, there is no difficulty to account for their being dispersed throughout the atmosphere, and carried to every point of the globe, where there is a station fitted for them. Lichens in particular ascend to great elevations, sometimes growing two thousand feet above the line of perpetual snow, at the utmost limits of vegetation, and where the mean temperature is nearly at the freezing point. This elevated position must contribute greatly to facilitate the dispersion of those buoyant particles of which their fructification consists.*

Some have inferred, from the springing up of mushrooms whenever particular soils and decomposed organic matter are mixed together, that the production of fungi is accidental, and not analogous to that of perfect plants.* But Fries, whose authority on these questions is entitled to the highest respect, has shown the fallacy of this argument in favour of the old doctrine of equivocal generation. "The sporules of fungi," says this naturalist, "are so infinite, that in a single individual of Reticularia maxima, I have counted above ten millions, and so subtile as to be scarcely visible, often resembling thin smoke; so light that they may be raised perhaps by evaporation into the atmosphere, and dispersed in so many ways by the attraction of the sun, by insects, wind, elasticity, adhesion, &c., that it is difficult to conceive a place from which they may be excluded."

---

* Linn., Tour in Lapland, vol. ii. p. 282.

*Agency of rivers and currents.*—In considering, in the next place, the instrumentality of the aqueous agents of dispersion, I cannot do better than cite the words of one of our ablest botanical writers. "The mountain stream or torrent," observes Keith, "washes down to the valley the seeds which may accidentally fall into it, or which it may happen to sweep from its banks when it suddenly overflows them. The broad and majestic river, winding along the extensive plain, and traversing the continents of the world, conveys to the distance of many hundreds of miles the seeds that may have vegetated at its source. Thus the southern shores of the Baltic are visited by seeds which grew in the interior of Germany; and the western shores of the Atlantic by seeds that have been generated in the interior of America."† Fruits, moreover, indigenous to America and the West Indies, such as that of the Mimosa scandens, the cashew-nut, and others, have been known to be drifted across the Atlantic by the Gulf stream, on the western coasts of Europe, in such a state that they might have vegetated had the climate and soil been favourable. Among these the Guilandina Bonduc, a leguminous plant, is particularly mentioned, as having been raised from a seed found on the west coast of Ireland.*

---

* Lindley, Introd. to Nat. Syst. of Botany, who cites Fries.

† System of Physiological Botany, vol. ii. p. 405.

Sir Hans Sloane states, that several kinds of beans cast ashore on the Orkney Isles, and the coast of Ireland, are derived from trees which grow in the West Indies, and many of them in Jamaica. He conjectures that they may have been conveyed by rivers into the sea, and then by the Gulf stream to greater distances, in the same manner as the sea-weed called Lenticula marina, or Sargasso, which grows on the rocks about Jamaica, is known to be "carried by the winds and current towards the coast of Florida, and thence into the North American ocean, where it lies very thick on the surface of the sea."†

The absence of liquid matter in the composition of seeds renders them comparatively insensible to heat and cold, so that they may be carried without detriment through climates where the plants themselves would instantly perish. Such is their power of resisting the effects of heat, that Spallanzani mentions some seeds that germinated after having been boiled in water.‡ When, therefore, a strong gale, after blowing violently off the land for a time, dies away, and the seeds alight upon the surface of the waters, or wherever the ocean, by eating away the sea-cliffs, throws down into its waves plants which would never otherwise approach the shores, the tides and currents become active instruments in assisting the dissemination of almost all classes of the vegetable kingdom.

---

* Brown, Append. to Tuckey, No. V. p. 481.

† Phil. Trans., 1696.

‡ System of Physiological Botany, vol. ii. p. 403.

In a collection of six hundred plants from the neighbourhood of the river Zaire, in Africa, Mr. Brown found that thirteen species were also met with on the opposite shores of Guiana and Brazil. He remarked that most of these plants were found only on the lower parts of the river Zaire, and were chiefly such as produced seeds capable of retaining their vitality a long time in the currents of the ocean.

*The migration of plants aided by islands.*—Islands, moreover, and even the smallest rocks, play an important part in aiding such migrations; for when seeds alight upon them from the atmosphere, or are thrown up by the surf, they often vegetate, and supply the winds and waves with a repetition of new and uninjured crops of fruit and seeds. These may afterwards pursue their course through the atmosphere, or along the surface of the sea, in the same direction. The number of plants found at any given time on an islet affords us no test whatever of the extent to which it may have co-operated towards this end, since a variety of species may first thrive there and then perish, and be followed by other chance-comers like themselves.

Currents and winds in the arctic regions drift along icebergs covered with an alluvial soil on which herbs and pine-saplings are seen growing, which may often continue to vegetate on some distant shore where the ice-island is stranded.

*Dispersion of marine plants.* — With respect to marine vegetation, the seeds, being in their native element, may remain immersed in water without injury for indefinite periods, so that there is no difficulty in conceiving the diffusion of species wherever uncongenial climates, contrary currents, and other causes, do not interfere. All are familiar with the sight of the floating sea-weed,

> "Flung from the rock on ocean's foam to sail,
> Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail."

Remarkable accumulations of that species of sea-weed generally known as gulf-weed, or sargasso, occur on each side of the equator in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. Columbus and other navigators, who first encountered these banks of algæ in the Northern Atlantic, compared them to vast inundated meadows, and state that they retarded the progress of their vessels. The most extensive bank is a little west of the meridian of Fayal, one of the Azores, between latitudes 35° and 36°: violent north winds sometimes prevail in this space, and drive the sea-weed to low latitudes, as far as the 24th or even the 20th degree.*

The hollow pod-like receptacles in which the seeds of many algæ are lodged, and the filaments attached to the seed-vessels of others, seem intended to give buoyancy; and I may observe that these hydrophytes are in general *proliferous*, so that the smallest fragment of a branch can be developed into a perfect plant. The seeds, moreover, of the greater number of species are enveloped with a mucous matter like that which surrounds the eggs of some fish, and which not only protects them from injury, but serves to attach them to floating bodies or to rocks.

---

* Greville, Introduction to Algæ Britannicæ, p. 12.

*Agency of animals in the distribution of plants.*— But we have as yet considered part only of the fertile resources of nature for conveying seeds to a distance from their place of growth. The various tribes of animals are busily engaged in furthering an object whence they derive such important advantages. Sometimes an express provision is found in the structure of seeds to enable them to adhere firmly by prickles, hooks, and hairs, to the coats of animals, or feathers of the winged tribe, to which they remain attached for weeks, or even months, and are borne along into every region whither birds or quadrupeds may migrate. Linnæus enumerates fifty genera of plants, and the number now known to botanists is much greater, which are armed with hooks, by which, when ripe, they adhere to the coats of animals. Most of these vegetables, he remarks, require a soil enriched with dung. Few have failed to mark the locks of wool hanging on the thorn-bushes, wherever the sheep pass, and it is probable that the wolf or lion never give chase to herbivorous animals without being unconsciously subservient to this part of the vegetable economy.

A deer has strayed from the herd when browsing on some rich pasture, when he is suddenly alarmed by the approach of his foe. He instantly takes to flight, dashing through many a thicket, and swimming across many a river and lake. The seeds of the herbs and shrubs which have adhered to his smoking flanks, are washed off again by the waters. The thorny spray is torn off, and fixes itself in his hairy coat, until brushed off again in other thickets and copses. Even on the spot where the victim is devoured many of the seeds which he had swallowed immediately before the chase may be left on the ground uninjured, and ready to spring up in a new soil.

The passage, indeed, of undigested seeds through the stomachs of animals is one of the most efficient causes of the dissemination of plants, and is of all others, perhaps, the most likely to be overlooked. Few are ignorant that a portion of the oats eaten by a horse preserve their germinating faculty in the dung. The fact of their being still nutritious is not lost on the sagacious rook. To many, says Linnæus, it seems extraordinary, and something of a prodigy, that when a field is well tilled and sown with the best wheat, it frequently produces darnel or the wild oat, especially if it be manured with new dung: they do not consider that the fertility of the smaller seeds is not destroyed in the stomachs of animals.*

*Agency of birds.* — Some birds of the order Passeres devour the seeds of plants in great quantities, which they eject again in very distant places, without destroying its faculty of vegetation; thus a flight of larks will fill the cleanest field with a great quantity of various kinds of plants, as the melilot trefoil (*Medicago lupulina*), and others whose seeds are so heavy that the wind is not able to scatter them to any distance.† In like manner, the blackbird and misselthrush, when they devour berries in too great quantities, are known to consign them to the earth undigested in their excrement.‡

---

* Linnæus, Amœn. Acad., vol. ii. p. 409.

† Amœn. Acad., vol. iv. Essay 75. § 8.

‡ Ibid., vol. vi. § 22.

Pulpy fruits serve quadrupeds and birds as food, while their seeds, often hard and indigestible, pass uninjured through the intestines, and are deposited far from their original place of growth in a condition peculiarly fit for vegetation.* So well are the farmers, in some parts of England, aware of this fact, that when they desire to raise a quick-set hedge in the shortest possible time, they feed turkeys with the haws of the common white-thorn (*Cratægus Oxyacantha*), and then sow the stones which are ejected in their excrement, whereby they gain an entire year in the growth of the plant.† Birds when they pluck cherries, sloes, and haws, fly away with them to some convenient place; and when they have devoured the fruit, drop the stone into the ground. Captain Cook, in his account of the volcanic island of Tanna, one of the New Hebrides, which he visited in his second voyage, makes the following interesting observation: — "Mr. Forster, in his botanical excursion this day, shot a pigeon, in the craw of which was a wild nutmeg. He took some pains to find the tree on this island, but his endeavours were without success."‡ It is easy, therefore, to perceive, that birds in their migrations to great distances, and even across seas, may transport seeds to new isles and continents.

The sudden deaths to which great numbers of frugivorous birds are annually exposed must not be omitted as auxiliary to the transportation of seeds to new habitations. When the sea retires from the shore, and leaves fruits and seeds on the beach, or in the mud of estuaries, it might, by the returning tide, wash them away again, or destroy them by long immersion; but when they are gathered by land birds which frequent the sea-side, or by waders and water-fowl, they are often borne inland; and if the bird to whose crop they have been consigned is killed, they may be left to grow up far from the sea. Let such an accident happen but once in a century, or a thousand years, it will be sufficient to spread many of the plants from one continent to another; for, in estimating the activity of these causes, we must not consider whether they act slowly in relation to the period of our observation, but in reference to the duration of species in general.

---

* Smith's Introd. to Phys. and Syst. Botany, p. 304. 1807.

† This information was communicated to me by Professor Henslow, of Cambridge.

‡ Book iii. ch. iv.

Let us trace the operation of this cause in connexion with others. A tempestuous wind bears the seeds of a plant many miles through the air, and then delivers them to the ocean; the oceanic current drifts them to a distant continent; by the fall of the tide they become the food of numerous birds, and one of these is seized by a hawk or eagle, which, soaring across hill and dale to a place of retreat, leaves, after devouring its prey, the unpalatable seeds to spring up and flourish in a new soil.

The machinery before adverted to is so capable of disseminating seeds over almost unbounded spaces, that were we more intimately acquainted with the economy of nature, we might probably explain all the instances which occur of the aberration of plants to great distances from their native countries. The real difficulty which must present itself to every one who contemplates the present geographical distribution of species, is the small number of exceptions to the rule of the non-intermixture of different groups of plants.

Why have they not, supposing them to have been ever so distinct originally, become more blended and confounded together in the lapse of ages?

*Agency of man in the dispersion of plants.*—But in addition to all the agents already enumerated as instrumental in diffusing plants over the globe, we have still to consider man—one of the most important of all. He transports with him, into every region, the vegetables which he cultivates for his wants; and is the involuntary means of spreading a still greater number which are useless to him, or even noxious. "When the introduction of cultivated plants is of recent date, there is no difficulty in tracing their origin; but when it is of high antiquity, we are often ignorant of the true country of the plants on which we feed. No one contests the American origin of the maize or the potato; nor the origin, in the old world, of the coffee-tree, and of wheat. But there are certain objects of culture, of very ancient date, between the tropics, such, for example, as the banana, of which the origin cannot be verified. Armies, in modern times, have been known to carry, in all directions, grain and cultivated vegetables from one extremity of Europe to the other; and thus have shown us how, in more ancient times, the conquests of Alexander, the distant expeditions of the Romans, and afterwards the crusades, may have transported many plants from one part of the world to the other."*

But, besides the plants used in agriculture, the number which have been naturalized by accident, or which man has spread unintentionally, is considerable. One of our old authors, Josselyn, gives a catalogue of such plants as had, in his time, sprung up in the colony since the English planted and kept cattle in New England. They were two-and-twenty in number. The common nettle was the first which the settlers noticed; and the plantain was called by the Indians " Englishman's foot," as if it sprung from their footsteps.*

---

* De Candolle, Essai Elémen. &c., p. 50.

" We have introduced everywhere," observes De Candolle, " some weeds which grow among our various kinds of wheat, and which have been received, perhaps, originally from Asia along with them. Thus, together with the Barbary wheat, the inhabitants of the south of Europe have sown, for many ages, the plants of Algiers and Tunis. With the wools and cottons of the East, or of Barbary, there are often brought into France the grains of exotic plants, some of which naturalize themselves. Of this I will cite a striking example. There is, at the gate of Montpellier, a meadow set apart for drying foreign wool *after it has been washed.* There hardly passes a year without foreign plants being found naturalized in this drying-ground. I have gathered there Centaurea parviflora, Psoralea palæstina, and Hypericum crispum." This fact is not only illustrative of the aid which man lends inadvertently to the propagation of plants, but it also demonstrates the multiplicity of seeds which are borne about in the woolly and hairy coats of wild animals.

The same botanist mentions instances of plants naturalized in seaports by the ballast of ships; and several examples of others which have spread through Europe from botanical gardens, so as to have become more common than many indigenous species.

It is scarcely a century, says Linnæus, since the

---

* Quarterly Review, vol. xxx. p. 8.

Canadian erigeron, or flea-bane, was brought from America to the botanical garden at Paris; and already the seeds have been carried by the winds, so that it is diffused over France, the British islands, Italy, Sicily, Holland, and Germany.* Several others are mentioned by the Swedish naturalist, as having been dispersed by similar means. The common thorn-apple (*Datura Stramonium*), observes Willdenow, now grows as a noxious weed throughout all Europe, with the exception of Sweden, Lapland, and Russia. It came from the East Indies and Abyssinia to us, and was so universally spread by certain quacks who used its seed as an emetic.†

In hot and ill-cultivated countries, such naturalizations take place more easily. Thus the Chenopodium ambrosioides, sown by Mr. Burchell on a point of St. Helena, multiplied so in four years as to become one of the commonest weeds in the island.‡

The most remarkable proof, says De Candolle, of the extent to which man is unconsciously the instrument of dispersing and naturalizing species, is found in the fact, that in New Holland, America, and the Cape of Good Hope, the aboriginal European species exceed in number all the others which have come from any distant regions; so that, in this instance, the influence of man has surpassed that of all the other causes which tend to disseminate plants to remote districts.

Although we are but slightly acquainted, as yet, with the extent of our instrumentality in naturalizing species, yet the facts ascertained afford no small reason to suspect, that the number which we introduce unintentionally exceeds all those transported by design. Nor is it unnatural to suppose that the functions, which the inferior beings, extirpated by man, once discharged in the economy of nature, should devolve upon the human race. If we drive many birds of passage from different countries, we are probably required to fulfil their office of carrying seeds, eggs of fish, insects, molluscs, and other creatures, to distant regions; if we destroy quadrupeds, we must replace them, not merely as consumers of the animal and vegetable substances which they devoured, but as disseminators of plants, and of the inferior classes of the animal kingdom. I do not mean to insinuate that the very same changes which man brings about would have taken place by means of the agency of other species, but merely that he supersedes a certain number of agents; and so far as he disperses plants unintentionally, or against his will, his intervention is strictly analogous to that of the species so extirpated.

---

* Essay on the Habitable Earth, Amœn. Acad., vol. ii. p. 409.

† Principles of Botany, p. 389.

‡ Ibid.

I may observe, moreover, that if, at former periods, the animals inhabiting any given district have been partially altered by the extinction of some species, and the introduction of others, whether by new creations or by immigration, a change must have taken place in regard to the particular plants conveyed about with them to foreign countries. As, for example, when one set of migratory birds is substituted for another, the countries from and to which seeds are transported are immediately changed. Vicissitudes, therefore, analogous to those which man has occasioned, may have previously attended the springing up of new relations between species in the vegetable and animal worlds.

It may also be remarked, that if man is the most active agent in enlarging, so also is he in circumscribing the geographical boundaries of particular plants. He promotes the migration of some, he retards that of other species, so that, while in many respects he appears to be exerting his power to blend and confound the various provinces of indigenous species, he is, in other ways, instrumental in obstructing the fusion into one group of the inhabitants of contiguous provinces.

Thus, for example, when two botanical regions exist in the same great continent, such as *the European region*, comprehending the central parts of Europe and those surrounding the Mediterranean, and *the Oriental region*, as it has been termed, embracing the countries adjoining the Black Sea and the Caspian, the interposition between these of thousands of square miles of cultivated lands, opposes a new and powerful barrier against the mutual interchange of indigenous plants. Botanists are well aware that garden plants naturalize and diffuse themselves with great facility in comparatively unreclaimed countries, but spread themselves slowly and with difficulty in districts highly cultivated. There are many obvious causes for this difference: by drainage and culture the natural variety of stations is diminished, and those stray individuals by which the passage of a species from one fit station to another is effected, are no sooner detected by the agriculturist, than they are uprooted as weeds. The larger shrubs and trees, in particular, can scarcely ever escape observation, when they have attained a certain size, and will rarely fail to be cut down if unprofitable.

The same observations are applicable to the interchange of the insects, birds, and quadrupeds of two regions situated like those above alluded to. No beasts of prey are permitted to make their way across the intervening arable tracts. Many birds, and hundreds of insects, which would have found some palatable food amongst the various herbs and trees of the primeval wilderness, are unable to subsist on the olive, the vine, the wheat, and a few trees and grasses favoured by man. In addition, therefore, to his direct intervention, man, in this case, operates indirectly to impede the dissemination of plants, by intercepting the migrations of animals, many of which would otherwise have been active in transporting seeds from one province to another.

Whether, in the vegetable kingdom, the influence of man will tend, after a considerable lapse of ages, to render the geographical range of *species in general* more extended, as De Candolle seems to anticipate, or whether the compensating agency above alluded to, will not counterbalance the exceptions caused by our naturalizations, admits at least of some doubt. In the attempt to form an estimate on this subject, we must be careful not to underrate, or almost overlook, as some appear to have done, the influence of man in checking the diffusion of plants, and restricting their distribution to narrower limits.

# CHAPTER VI.

## LAWS WHICH REGULATE THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIES—*continued.*

Geographical distribution of animals — Buffon on specific distinctness of quadrupeds of old and new world — Different regions of indigenous mammalia — Quadrupeds in islands — Range of the Cetacea — Dispersion of quadrupeds (p. 54.) — their powers of swimming — Migratory instincts — Drifting of animals on ice-floes (p. 61.) — On floating islands of drift-timber — Migrations of Cetacea — Habitations of birds (p. 67.) — Their migrations and facilities of diffusion — Distribution of reptiles, and their powers of dissemination.

*Geographical distribution of animals.* — ALTHOUGH in speculating on "philosophical possibilities," said Buffon, "the same temperature might have been expected, all other circumstances being equal, to produce the same beings in different parts of the globe, both in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, yet it is an undoubted fact, that when America was discovered, its indigenous quadrupeds were all dissimilar to those previously known in the old world. The elephant, the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the camelopard, the camel, the dromedary, the buffalo, the horse, the ass, the lion, the tiger, the apes, the baboons, and a number of other mammalia, were nowhere to be met with on the new continent; while in the old, the American species, of the same great class, were nowhere to be seen — the tapir, the lama, the pecari, the jaguar, the couguar, the agouti, the paca, the coati, and the sloth."

These phenomena, although few in number relatively to the whole animate creation, were so striking and so positive in their nature, that the great French naturalist caught sight at once of a general law in the geographical distribution of organic beings, namely, the limitation of groups of distinct species to regions separated from the rest of the globe by certain natural barriers. It was, therefore, in a truly philosophical spirit that, relying on the clearness of the evidence obtained respecting the larger quadrupeds, he ventured to call in question the identifications announced by some contemporary naturalists of species of animals said to be common to the southern extremities of America and Africa.*

*Causes which prevent the migration of animals.*— The migration of quadrupeds from one part of the globe to another, observes one of our ablest writers, is prevented by uncongenial climates and the branches of the ocean which intersect continents. "Hence, by a reference to the geographical site of countries, we may divide the earth into a certain number of regions fitted to become the abodes of particular groups of animals, and we shall find, on inquiry, that each of these provinces, thus conjecturally marked out, is actually inhabited by a distinct nation of quadrupeds."†

Where the continents of the old and new world approximate to each other towards the north, the narrow straits which separate them are frozen over in winter, and the distance is further lessened by intervening islands. Thus a passage from one continent to another becomes practicable to such quadrupeds as are fitted to endure the intense cold of the arctic circle. Accordingly, the whole arctic region has become one of the provinces of the animal kingdom, and contains many species common to both the great continents. But the temperate regions of America, which are separated by a wide extent of ocean from those of Europe and Asia, contain each a distinct nation of indigenous quadrupeds. There are three groups of *tropical* mammalia belonging severally to America, Africa, and continental India, each inhabiting lands separated from each other by the ocean.

---

* Buffon, vol. v. — On the Virginian Opossum.

† Prichard's Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 54. In some of the preliminary chapters will be found a sketch of the leading acts illustrative of the geographical distribution of animals, drawn up with the author's usual clearness and ability.

In Peru and Chili, says Humboldt, the region of the grasses, which is at an elevation of from 12,300 to 15,400 feet, is inhabited by crowds of lama, guanaco, and alpaca. These quadrupeds, which here represent the genus camel of the ancient continent, have not extended themselves either to Brazil or Mexico; because, during their journey, they must necessarily have descended into regions that were too hot for them.*

*Animals in New Holland.*—New Holland is well known to contain a most singular and characteristic assemblage of mammiferous animals, consisting of more than forty species of the marsupial family, or those furnished with a pouch under the belly for their young, of which scarcely any congeners occur elsewhere, except a few species in some islands of the Indian archipelago and the opossums of America. There are, it appears, some examples of marsupial animals in the eastern hemisphere out of the Australian continent. Thus the Phalangista vulpina inhabits both Sumatra and New Holland; the P. ursina is found in the island of Celebes; P. chrysorrhos, in the Moluccas; P. maculata, and P. cavifrons, in Banda and Amboyna.*

---

* Description of the Equatorial Regions.

This almost exclusive occupation of the Australian continent by the kangaroos and other tribes of pouched animals, although it has justly excited great attention, is a fact, nevertheless, in strict accordance with the general laws of the distribution of species; since, in other parts of the globe, we find peculiarities of form, structure, and habit, in birds, reptiles, insects, or plants, confined entirely to one hemisphere, or one continent, and sometimes to much narrower limits.

*In the south of Africa.*—The southern region of Africa, where that continent extends into the temperate zone, constitutes another separate zoological province, surrounded as it is on three sides by the ocean, and cut off from the countries of milder climate, in the northern hemisphere, by the intervening torrid zone. In many instances, this region contains the same genera which are found in temperate climates to the northward of the line: but then the southern are different from the northern species. Thus, in the south we find the quagga and the zebra; in the north, the horse, the ass, and the jiggetai of Asia.

The south of Africa is spread out into fine level plains from the tropic to the Cape; in this region, says Pennant, besides the horse genus, of which five species have been found, there are also peculiar species of rhinoceros, the hog, and the hyrax, among pachydermatous races; and amongst the ruminating, the giraffe, the Cape buffalo, and a variety of remarkable antelopes, as the springbok, the oryx, the gnou, the leucophoë, the pygarga, and several others.*

---

* Temminck, Mammologie.

*In the Indian archipelago.*—The Indian archipelago presents peculiar phenomena in regard to its indigenous mammalia, which, in their generic character, recede, in some respects, from that of the animals of the Indian continent, and approximate to the African. The Sunda isles contain a hippopotamus, which is wanting in the rivers of Asia; Sumatra, a peculiar species of tapir, and a rhinoceros resembling the African more than the Indian species, but specifically distinguishable from both.†

Beyond the Indian archipelago is an extensive region, including New Guinea, New Britain, and New Ireland, together with the archipelago of Solomon's Islands, the New Hebrides, and Louisiade, and the more remote group of islands in the great southern ocean, which may be considered as forming one zoological province. Although these remarkable countries are extremely fertile in their vegetable productions, they are almost wholly destitute of native warm-blooded quadrupeds, except a few species of bats, and some domesticated animals in the possession of the natives.‡

*Quadrupeds in islands.*—Quadrupeds found on islands situated near the continents generally form a part of the stock of animals belonging to the adjacent mainland; "but small islands remote from continents are in general altogether destitute of land quadrupeds, except such as appear to have been conveyed to them by men. Kerguelen's Land, Juan Fernandez, the Gallapagos, and the Isles de Lobos, are examples of this fact. Among all the groups of fertile islands in the Pacific Ocean, no quadrupeds have been found, except dogs, hogs, rats, and a few bats. The bats have been found in New Zealand and the more westerly groups; they may probably have made their way along the chain of islands which extend from the shores of New Guinea far into the Southern Pacific. The hogs and the dogs appear to have been conveyed by the natives from New Guinea. The Indian islands, near New Guinea, abound in oxen, buffaloes, goats, deer, hogs, dogs, cats, and rats; but none of them are said to have reached New Guinea, except the hog and the dog. The New Guinea hog is of the Chinese variety, and was probably brought from some of the neighbouring islands, being the animal most in request among savages. It has run wild in New Guinea. Thence it has been conveyed to the New Hebrides, the Tonga and Society Isles, and to the Marquesas; but it is still wanting in the more easterly islands, and, to the southward, in New Caledonia.

---

* Pennant's Hist. of Quadrupeds, cited by Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 66.

† Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 66.; Cuvier, Ann. du Muséum, tom. vii.

‡ Prichard, ibid., p. 56.

"Dogs may be traced from New Guinea to the New Hebrides and Fiji Isles; but they are wanting in the Tonga Isles, though found among the Society and Sandwich islanders, by some of whom they are used for food: to the southward they have been conveyed to New Caledonia and New Zealand. In Easter Island, the most remotely situated in this ocean, there are no domestic animals except fowls and rats, which are eaten by the natives: these animals are found in most of the islands; the fowls are probably from New Guinea.

Rats are to be found even on some desert inlands, whither they may have been conveyed by canoes which have occasionally approached the shore. It is known, also, that rats occasionally swim in large numbers to considerable distances." *

*Geographical range of the cetacea.*—It is natural to suppose that the geographical range of the different species of cetacea should be less correctly ascertained than that of the terrestrial mammifers. It is, however, well known that the whales which are obtained by our fishers in the South Seas are distinct from those of the North; and the same dissimilarity has been found in all the other marine animals of the same class, so far as they have yet been studied by naturalists.

*Dispersion of quadrupeds.*—Let us now inquire what facilities the various land quadrupeds enjoy of spreading themselves over the surface of the earth. In the first place, as their numbers multiply, all of them, whether they feed on plants, or prey on other animals, are disposed to scatter themselves gradually over as wide an area as is accessible to them. But before they have extended their migrations over a large space, they are usually arrested either by the sea, or a zone of uncongenial climate, or some lofty and unbroken chain of mountains, or a tract already occupied by a hostile and more powerful species.

*Their powers of swimming.*—Rivers and narrow friths can seldom interfere with their progress; for the greater part of them swim well, and few are without this power when urged by danger and pressing want. Thus, amongst beasts of prey, the tiger is seen swimming about among the islands and creeks in the delta of the Ganges, and the jaguar traverses with ease the largest streams in South America.* The bear, also, and the bison, cross the current of the Mississippi. The popular error, that the common swine cannot escape by swimming when thrown into the water, has been contradicted by several curious and well-authenticated instances during the recent floods in Scotland. One pig, only six months old, after having been carried down from Garmouth to the bar at the mouth of the Spey, a distance of a quarter of a mile, swam four miles eastward to Port Gordon, and landed safe. Three others, of the same age and litter, swam, at the same time, five miles to the west, and landed at Blackhill.*

---

* Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 75.

In an adult and wild state, these animals would doubtless have been more strong and active, and might, when hard pressed, have performed a much longer voyage. Hence islands remote from the continent may obtain inhabitants by casualities which, like the late storms in Morayshire, may only occur once in many centuries, or thousands of years, under all the same circumstances. It is obvious that powerful tides, winds, and currents, may sometimes carry along quadrupeds capable, in like manner, of preserving themselves for hours in the sea, to very considerable distances; and in this way, perhaps, the tapir (*Tapir Indicus*) may have become common to Sumatra and the Malayan peninsula.

To the elephant, in particular, the power of crossing rivers is essential in a wild state, for the quantity of food which a herd of these animals consumes renders it necessary that they should be constantly moving from place to place. The elephant crosses the stream in two ways. If the bed of the river be hard, and the water not of too great a depth, he fords it. But when he crosses great rivers, such as the Ganges and the Niger, the elephant swims deep, so deep, that the end of his trunk only is out of the water; for it is a matter of indifference to him whether his body be completely immersed, provided he can bring the tip of his trunk to the surface, so as to breathe the external air.

---

* Buffon, vol. v. p. 204.

† Sir T. D. Lauder, Bart., on the Floods in Morayshire, Aug. 1829, p. 302. second edition.

Animals of the deer kind frequently take to the water, especially in the rutting season, when the stags are seen swimming for several leagues at a time, from island to island, in search of the does, especially in the Canadian lakes; and in some countries where there are islands near the sea shore, they fearlessly enter the sea and swim to them. In hunting excursions, in North America, the elk of that country is frequently pursued for great distances through the water.

The large herbivorous animals, which are gregarious, can never remain long in a confined region, as they consume so much vegetable food. The immense herds of bisons which often, in the great valley of the Mississippi, blacken the surface, near the banks of that river and its tributaries, are continually shifting their quarters, followed by wolves, which prowl about in their rear. "It is no exaggeration," says Mr. James, "to assert, that in one place, on the banks of the Platte, at least ten thousand bisons burst on our sight in an instant. In the morning, we again sought the living picture; but upon all the plain, which last evening was so teeming with noble animals, not one remained." *

---

* Expedition from Pittsburg to the Rocky Mountains, vol. ii. p. 153.

*Migratory instincts.* — Besides the disposition common to the individuals of every species slowly to extend their range in search of food, in proportion as their numbers augment, a migratory instinct often develops itself in an extraordinary manner, when, after an unusually prolific season, or upon a sudden scarcity of provisions, great multitudes are threatened by famine. It may be useful to enumerate some examples of these migrations, because they may put us upon our guard against attributing a high antiquity to a particular species merely because it is diffused over a great space: they show clearly how soon, in a state of nature, a newly created species might spread itself, in every direction, from a single point.

In very severe winters, great numbers of the black bears of America migrate from Canada into the United States; but in milder seasons, when they have been well fed, they remain and hybernate in the north.* The rein-deer which, in Scandinavia, can scarcely exist to the south of the sixty-fifth parallel, descends, in consequence of the greater coldness of the climate, to the fiftieth degree, in Chinese Tartary, and often roves into a country of more southern latitude than any part of England.

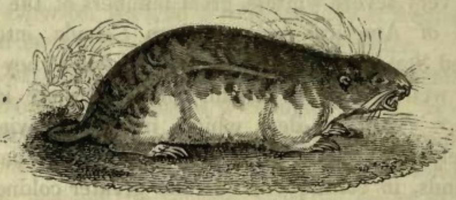
In Lapland, and other high latitudes, the common squirrels, whenever they are compelled, by want of provisions, to quit their usual abodes, migrate in amazing numbers, and travel directly forwards, allowing neither rocks and forests, nor the broadest waters, to turn them from their course. Great numbers are often drowned in attempting to pass friths and rivers. In like manner the small Norway rat sometimes pursues its migrations in a straight line across rivers and lakes; and Pennant informs us, that when the rats, in Kamtschatka, become too numerous, they gather together in the spring, and proceed in great bodies westward, swimming over rivers, lakes, and arms of the sea. Many are drowned or destroyed by water-fowl or fish. As soon as they have crossed the river Penginsk, at the head of the gulf of the same name, they turn southward, and reach the rivers Judoma and Okotsk by the middle of July; a district more than 800 miles distant from their point of departure.

---

* Richardson's Fauna Boreali-Americana, p. 16.

The lemings, also, a small kind of rat, are described as natives of the mountains of Kolen, in Lapland; and once or twice in a quarter of a century they appear in vast numbers, advancing along the ground, and "devouring every green thing." Innumerable bands march from the Kolen, through Nordland and Finmark, to the Western Ocean, which they immediately enter; and, after swimming about for some time, perish. Other bands take their route through Swedish Lapland, to the Bothnian Gulf, where they are drowned in the same manner. They are followed in their journeys by bears, wolves, and foxes, which prey upon them incessantly. They generally move in lines, which are about three feet from each other, and exactly parallel, going

Fig. 49.



*The Leming, or Lapland Marmot* (Mus Lemmus, *Linn.*).

directly forward through rivers and lakes; and when they meet with stacks of hay or corn, gnawing their way through them instead of passing round.* These excursions usually precede a rigorous winter, of which the lemings seem in some way forewarned.

Vast troops of the wild ass, or *onager* of the ancients, which inhabit the mountainous deserts of Great Tartary, feed, during the summer, in the tracts east and north of Lake Aral. In the autumn they collect in herds of hundreds, and even thousands, and direct their course towards the north of India, and often to Persia, to enjoy a warm retreat during winter.† Bands of two or three hundred quaggas, a species of wild ass, are sometimes seen to migrate from the tropical plains of southern Africa to the vicinity of the Malaleveen river. During their migrations they are followed by lions, who slaughter them night by night.‡

The migratory swarms of the springbok, or Cape antelope, afford another illustration of the rapidity with which a species, under certain circumstances, may be diffused over a continent. When the stagnant pools of the immense deserts south of the Orange River dry up, which often happens after intervals of three or four years, myriads of these animals desert the parched soil, and pour down like a deluge on the cultivated regions near the Cape. The havoc committed by them resembles that of the African locusts; and so crowded are the herds, that "the lion has been seen to walk in the midst of the compressed phalanx with only as much room between him and his victims as the fears of those immediately around could procure by pressing outwards."*

---

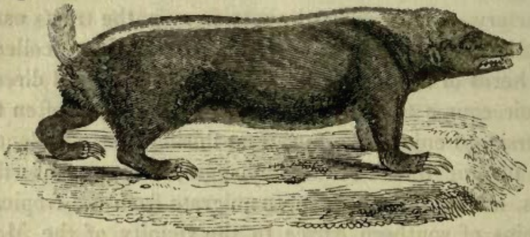
* Phil. Trans., vol. ii. p. 872.

† Wood's Zoography, vol. i. p. 11.

‡ On the authority of Mr. Campbell. Library of Entert. Know., Menageries, vol. i. p. 152.

Dr. Horsfield mentions a singular fact in regard to the geographical distribution of the Mydaus meliceps, an animal intermediate between the polecat and badger. It inhabits Java, and is "confined exclusively to those mountains which have an elevation of more than seven thousand feet above the level of the ocean; on these it occurs with the same regularity as many plants. The long-extended surface of Java, abounding with conical points which exceed this elevation, affords many places favourable for its resort. On ascending these mountains, the traveller scarcely fails to meet with this animal, which, from its peculiarities, is universally known to the inhabitants of these elevated tracts, while to those of the plains it is as strange as an animal from a foreign country. In my visits to the mountainous districts, I uniformly met with it; and, as far as the information of the natives can be relied on, it is found on all the mountains."†

Fig. 50.



*Mydaus meliceps, or badger-headed Mydaus. Length, including the tail, 16 inches.*

---

* Cuvier's Animal Kingdom by Griffiths, vol. ii. p. 109. Library of Entert. Know., Menageries, vol. i. p. 366.

† Horsfield, Zoological Researches in Java, No. ii., from which the figure is taken.

Now, if asked to conjecture how the Mydaus arrived at the elevated regions of each of these isolated mountains, we might say that, before the island was peopled by man, by whom their numbers are now thinned, they may occasionally have multiplied so as to be forced to collect together and migrate: in which case, notwithstanding the slowness of their motions, some few would succeed in reaching another mountain, some twenty, or even, perhaps, fifty miles distant; for although the climate of the hot intervening plains would be unfavourable to them, they might support it for a time, and would find there abundance of insects on which they feed. Volcanic eruptions, which, at different times, have covered the summits of some of those lofty cones with sterile sand and ashes, may have occasionally contributed to force on these migrations.

*Drifting of animals on ice-floes.*—The power of the terrestrial mammalia to cross the sea is very limited, and it was before stated that the same species is scarcely ever common to districts widely separated by the ocean. If there be some exceptions to this rule, they generally admit of explanation; for there are natural means whereby some animals may be floated across the water, and the sea sometimes wears a passage through a neck of land, leaving individuals of a species on each side of the new channel. Polar bears are known to have been frequently drifted on the ice from Greenland to Iceland: they can also swim to considerable distances, for Captain Parry, on the return of his ships through Barrow's Strait, met with a bear swimming in the water about midway between the shores, which were about forty miles apart, and where no ice was in sight.* "Near the east coast of Greenland," observes Scoresby, "they have been seen on the ice in such quantities, that they were compared to flocks of sheep on a common; and they are often found on field-ice, above two hundred miles from the shore."† Wolves, in the arctic regions, often venture upon the ice near the shore, for the purpose of preying upon young seals, which they surprise when asleep. When these ice-floes get detached, the wolves are often carried out to sea; and though some may be drifted to islands or continents, the greater part of them perish, and have been often heard in this situation howling dreadfully, as they die by famine.‡

During the short summer which visits Melville Island, various plants push forth their leaves and flowers the moment the snow is off the ground, and form a carpet spangled with the most lively colours. These secluded spots are reached annually by herds of musk-oxen and rein-deer, which travel immense distances over dreary and desolate regions, to graze undisturbed on these luxuriant pastures. § The rein-deer often pass along in the same manner, by the chain of the Aleutian Islands, from Behring's Straits to Kamtschatka, subsisting on the moss found in these islands during their passage. ||

*On floating islands of drift-wood.*—Within the tropics there are no ice-floes; but, as if to compensate for that mode of transportation, there are floating islets of matted trees, which are often borne along

---

* Append. to Parry's Second Voyage, years 1819–20.

† Account of the Arctic Regions, vol. i. p. 518.

‡ Turton, in a note to Goldsmith's Nat. Hist., vol. iii. p. 43.

§ Supplement to Parry's First Voyage of Disc., p. 189.

|| Godman's American Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 22.

through considerable spaces. These are sometimes seen sailing at the distance of fifty or one hundred miles from the mouth of the Ganges, with living trees standing erect upon them. The Amazon, the Congo, and the Orinoco, also produce these verdant rafts, which are formed in the manner already described when speaking of the great raft of the Atchafalaya, an arm of the Mississippi, where a natural bridge of timber, ten miles long, and more than two hundred yards wide, has existed for more than forty years, supporting a luxuriant vegetation, and rising and sinking with the water which flows beneath it.* That this enormous mass will one day break up and send down a multitude of floating islands to the Gulf of Mexico, is the hope and well-founded expectation of the inhabitants of Louisiana.

On these green islets of the Mississippi, observes Malte-Brun, young trees take root, and the pistia and nenuphar display their yellow flowers: there serpents, birds, and the cayman alligator, come to repose, and all are sometimes carried to the sea, and engulphed in its waters.†

Spix and Martius relate that, during their travels in Brazil, they were exposed to great danger while ascending the Amazon in a canoe, from the vast quantity of drift-wood constantly propelled against them by the current; so much so, that their safety depended on the crew being always on the alert to turn aside the trunks of trees with long poles. The tops alone of some trees appeared above water, others had their roots attached to them with so much soil that they might be compared to floating islets. On these, say the travellers, we saw some very singular assemblages of animals, pursuing peacefully their uncertain way in strange companionship. On one raft were several grave-looking storks, perched by the side of a party of monkeys, who made comical gestures, and burst into loud cries, on seeing the canoe. On another was seen a number of ducks and divers, sitting by a group of squirrels. Next came down, upon the stem of a large rotten cedar-tree, an enormous crocodile, by the side of a tiger-cat, both animals regarding each other with hostility and mistrust, but the saurian being evidently most at his ease, as conscious of his superior strength.*

---

* See vol. I. p. 282.

† System of Geography, vol. v. p. 157.

In a memoir lately published, a naval officer informs us, that, as he returned from China by the eastern passage, he fell in, among the Moluccas, with several small floating islands of this kind, covered with mangrove-trees interwoven with underwood. The trees and shrubs retained their verdure, receiving nourishment from a stratum of soil which formed a white beach round the margin of each raft, where it was exposed to the washing of the waves and the rays of the sun.† The occurrence of soil in such situations may easily be explained; for all the natural bridges of timber which occasionally connect the islands of the Ganges, Mississippi, and other rivers, with their banks, are exposed to floods of water, densely charged with sediment.

Captain W. H. Smyth informs me, that, when cruizing in the Cornwallis amidst the Philippine Islands, he has more than once seen, after those dreadful hurricanes called typhoons, floating masses of wood, with trees growing upon them; and ships have sometimes been in imminent peril, as often as these islands were mistaken for terra firma, when, in fact, they were in rapid motion.

---

* Spix and Martius, Reise, &c., vol. iii. pp. 1011. 1013.

† United Service Journal, No. xxiv. p. 697.

It is highly interesting to trace, in imagination, the effects of the passage of these rafts from the mouth of a large river to some archipelago, such as those in the South Pacific, raised from the deep, in comparatively modern times, by the operations of the volcano and the earthquake, and the joint labours of coral animals and testacea. If a storm arise, and the frail vessel be wrecked, still many a bird and insect may succeed in gaining, by flight, some island of the newly formed group, while the seeds and berries of herbs and shrubs, which fall into the waves, may be thrown upon the strand. But if the surface of the deep be calm, and the rafts are carried along by a current, or wafted by some slight breath of air fanning the foliage of the green trees, it may arrive, after a passage of several weeks, at the bay of an island, into which its plants and animals may be poured out as from an ark, and thus a colony of several hundred new species may at once be naturalized.

The reader should be reminded, that I merely advert to the transportation of these rafts as of extremely rare and accidental occurrence; but it may account, in tropical countries, for some of the rare exceptions to the general law of the confined range of species.

*Migrations of the cetacea.*—Many of the cetacea, the whales of the northern seas for example, are found to desert one tract of the sea, and to visit another very distant, when they are urged by want of food or danger. The seals also retire from the coasts of Greenland in July, return again in September, and depart again in March, to return in June. They proceed in great droves northwards, directing their course where the sea is most free from ice, and are observed to be extremely fat when they set out on this expedition, and very lean when they come home again.*

*Species of the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and Caspian, identical.*—Some naturalists have wondered that the sea calves, dolphins, and other marine mammalia of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, should be identical with those found in the Caspian; and among other fanciful theories, they have suggested that they may dive through subterranean conduits, and thus pass from one sea into the other. But as the occurrence of wolves and other noxious animals, on both sides of the British Channel, was adduced, by Desmarest, as one of many arguments to prove that England and France were once united; so the correspondence of the aquatic species of the inland seas of Asia with those of the Black Sea tends to confirm the hypothesis, for which there are abundance of independent geological data, that those seas were connected together by straits at no remote period of the earth's history.

## *Geographical Distribution and Migrations of Birds.*

I shall now offer a few observations on some of the other divisions of the animal kingdom. Birds, notwithstanding their great locomotive powers, form no exception to the general rules already laid down; but, in this class, as in plants and terrestrial quadrupeds, different groups of species are circumscribed within definite limits. We find, for example, one assemblage in the Brazils, another in the same latitudes in Central Africa, another in India, and a fourth in New Holland. But some species, again, are so local, that in the same archipelago, a single island frequently contains a species found in no other spot on the whole earth; as is exemplified in some of the parrot tribes. In this extensive family, which are, with few exceptions, inhabitants, of tropical regions, the American group has not one in common with the African, nor either of these with the parrots of India.*

---

* Krantz, vol. i. p. 129., cited by Goldsmith, Nat. Hist., vol. iii. p. 260.

Another illustration is afforded by that minute and beautiful tribe, the humming birds. The whole of them are, in the first place, peculiar to the new world; but there, although some have a considerable range, as the *Trochilus flammifrons*, which is common to Lima, the island of Juan Fernandez, and the Straits of Magellan †; other species are peculiar to some of the West India islands, and have not been found elsewhere in the western hemisphere. The ornithology of our own country affords a no less striking exemplification of the same law; for the common grouse (*Tetrao scoticus*) occurs nowhere in the known world except in the British isles.

Some species of the vulture tribe are said to be true cosmopolites; and the common wild goose (*Anas anser*, Linn.), if we may believe some ornithologists, is a general inhabitant of the globe, being met with from Lapland to the Cape of Good Hope, frequent in Arabia, Persia, China, and Japan, and in the American continent, from Hudson's Bay to South Carolina.* An extraordinary range has also been attributed to the nightingale, which extends from western Europe to Persia, and still farther. In a work entitled Specchio Comparativo †, by Charles Bonaparte, many species of birds are enumerated as common to Rome and Philadelphia; the greater part of these are migratory, but some of them, such as the long-eared owl (*Strix otus*), are permanent in both countries.

---

* Prichard, vol. i. p. 47.

† Captain King, during his late survey, found this bird at the Straits of Magellan, in the month of May—the depth of winter—sucking the flowers of the large species of fuchsia, then in bloom, in the midst of a shower of snow.

*Their facilities of diffusion.*—In parallel zones of the northern and southern hemispheres, a great general correspondence of form is observable, both in the aquatic and terrestrial birds; but there is rarely any specific identity: and this phenomenon is truly remarkable, when we recollect the readiness with which some birds, not gifted with great powers of flight, shift their quarters to different regions, and the facility with which others, possessing great strength of wing, perform their aërial voyage. Some migrate periodically from high latitudes, to avoid the cold of winter, and the accompaniments of cold,—scarcity of insects and vegetable food; others, it is said, for some particular kinds of nutriment required for rearing their young: for this purpose, they often traverse the ocean for thousands of miles, and recross it at other periods, with equal security.

---

* Bewick's Birds, vol. ii. p. 294., who cites Latham.

† Pisa, 1827 (not sold).

Periodical migrations, no less regular, are mentioned by Humboldt, of many American water-fowl, from one part of the tropics to another in a zone where there is the same temperature throughout the year. Immense flights of ducks leave the valley of the Orinoco, when the increasing depth of its waters and the flooding of its shores prevent them from catching fish, insects, and aquatic worms. They then betake themselves to the Rio Negro and Amazon, having passed from the eighth and third degrees of north latitude to the first and fourth of south latitude, directing their course south-south-east. In September, when the Orinoco decreases and re-enters into its channel, these birds return northwards.*

The insectivorous swallows which visit our island would perish during winter, if they did not annually repair to warmer climes. It is supposed that, in these aërial excursions the average rapidity of their flight is not less than fifty miles an hour; so that, when aided by the wind, they soon reach warmer latitudes. Spallanzani calculated that the swallow can fly at the rate of ninety-two miles an hour, and conceived that the rapidity of the swift might be three times greater.† The rate of flight of the eider duck (*Anas mollissima*) has been ascertained to be ninety miles an hour; and that of hawks, and several other tribes, to be 150 miles.

When we reflect how easily different species, in a great lapse of ages, may be each overtaken by gales and hurricanes, and, abandoning themselves to the tempest, be scattered at random through various regions of the earth's surface, where the temperature of the atmosphere, the vegetation, and the animal productions, might be suited to their wants, we shall be prepared to find some species capriciously distributed, and to be sometimes unable to determine the native countries of each. Captain Smyth informs me, that, when engaged in his survey of the Mediterranean, he encountered a gale in the Gulf of Lyons, at the distance of between twenty and thirty leagues from the coast of France, which bore along many land birds of various species, some of which alighted on the ship, while others were thrown with violence against the sails. In this manner islands become tenanted by species of birds inhabiting the nearest mainland.

---

* Voyage aux Régions Equinoxiales, tome vii. p. 429.

† Fleming, Phil. Zool., vol. ii. p. 43.

### *Geographical Distribution and Dissemination of Reptiles.*

A few facts respecting the third great class of vertebrated animals will suffice to show that the plan of nature in regard to their location on the globe is perfectly analogous to that already exemplified in other parts of the organic creation, and has probably been determined by similar causes.

*Habitations of reptiles.* — Of the great saurians, the gavials which inhabit the Ganges differ from the cayman of America, or the crocodile of the Nile. The monitor of New Holland is specifically distinct from the Indian species; these latter, again, from the African, and all from their congeners in the new world. So in regard to snakes; we find the boa of America represented by the python, a different though nearly allied genus in India. America is the country of the rattlesnake; Africa, of the cerastes; and Asia, of the hooded snake, or cobra di capello.

There is a legend that St. Patrick expelled all reptiles from Ireland; and certain it is that none of the three species of snakes common in England, nor the toad, have been observed there by naturalists. They have our common frog, and our water-newt, and according to Ray (Quad. 264.), the green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*). Schultes the botanist observed, a few years since, in his tour in England, that there were two great islands in Europe of which the floras were unknown — Sardinia and Ireland; he might perhaps, have added, the fauna of the latter country.

*Migrations of the larger reptiles.* — The range of the large reptiles is, in general, quite as limited as that of some orders of the terrestrial mammalia. The great saurians sometimes cross a considerable tract in order to pass from one river to another; but their motions by land are generally slower than those of quadrupeds. By water, however, they may transport themselves to distant situations more easily. The larger alligator of the Ganges sometimes descends beyond the brackish water of the Delta into the sea; and in such cases it might chance to be drifted away by a current, and survive till it reached a shore at some distance; but such casualities are probably very rare.*

Turtles migrate in large droves from one part of the ocean to another during the ovipositing season. Dr. Fleming, mentions, that an individual of the hawk's bill turtle (*Chelonia imbricata*), so common in the American seas, has been taken at Papa Stour, one of the West Zetland islands †; and, according to Sibbald, "the same animal came into Orkney." Another was taken, in 1774, in the Severn, according to Turton. Two instances, also, of the occurrence of the leathern tortoise (*C. coriacea*), on the coast of Cornwall, in 1756, are mentioned by Borlase. These animals of more southern seas can be considered only as stragglers attracted to our shores during uncommonly warm seasons by an abundant supply of food, or carried by the Gulf stream, or driven by storms to high latitudes.

---

* Malte-Brun says (Syst. of Geog., vol. viii. p. 193.), that a crocodile is still preserved at Lyons that was taken from the *Rhone*, about two centuries ago; but no particulars are given.

† Brit. Animals, p. 149.; who cites Sibbald.

Some of the smaller reptiles lay their eggs on aquatic plants; and these must often be borne rapidly by rivers, and conveyed to distant regions in a manner similar to the dispersion of seeds before adverted to. But that the larger ophidians may be themselves transported across the seas, is evident from the following most interesting account of the arrival of one at the island of St. Vincent. It is worthy of being recorded, says Mr. Guilding, "that a noble specimen of the *Boa constrictor* was lately conveyed to us by the currents, twisted round the trunk of a large sound cedar tree, which had probably been washed out of the bank by the floods of some great South American river, while its huge folds hung on the branches, as it waited for its prey. The monster was fortunately destroyed after killing a few sheep, and his skeleton now hangs before me in my study, putting me in mind how much reason I might have had to fear in my future rambles through the forests of St. Vincent, had this formidable reptile been a pregnant female, and escaped to a safe retreat."*

---

* Zool. Journ., vol. iii. p. 406. Dec. 1827.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LAWS WHICH REGULATE THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIES — *continued.*

**Geographical distribution and migrations of fish — of testacea — of zoophytes (p. 82.) — Distribution of insects — Migratory instincts of some species — Certain types characterize particular countries — Their means of dissemination — Geographical distribution and diffusion of man (p. 89.) — Speculations as to the birth-place of the human species — Progress of human population — Drifting of canoes to vast distances — On the involuntary influence of man in extending the range of many other species (p. 95.).**

### *Geographical Distribution and Migrations of Fish.*

Although we are less acquainted with the habitations of marine animals than with the grouping of the terrestrial species before described, yet it is well ascertained that their distribution is governed by the same general laws. The testimony borne by MM. Péron and Lesueur to this important fact is remarkably strong. These eminent naturalists, after collecting and describing many thousand species of marine animals which they brought to Europe from the southern hemisphere, insist most emphatically on their distinctness from those north of the equator; and this remark they extend to animals of all classes, from those of a more simple to those of a more complex organization — from the sponges and medusæ to the cetacea. "Among all those which we have been able to examine," say they, "with our own eyes, or with regard to which it has appeared to us possible to pronounce with certainty, there is not a single animal of the southern regions which is not distinguished by essential characters from the analogous species in the northern seas."*

The fish of the Arabian Gulf are said to differ entirely from those of the Mediterranean, notwithstanding the proximity of these seas. The flying-fish are found (some stragglers excepted) only between the tropics; in receding from the line, they never approach a higher latitude than the fortieth parallel. Those inhabiting the Atlantic are said to be different species from those of the eastern ocean.† The electric gymnotus belongs exclusively to America; the trembler, or *Silurus electricus*, to the rivers of Africa; but the torpedo, or cramp-fish, is said to be dispersed over all tropical, and many temperate seas.‡

All are aware that there are certain fish of passage which have their periodical migrations, like some tribes of birds. The salmon, towards the season of spawning, ascends the rivers for hundreds of miles, leaping up the cataracts which it meets in its course, and then retreats again into the depths of the ocean. The herring and the haddock, after frequenting certain shores, in vast shoals, for a series of years, desert them again, and resort to other stations, followed by the species which prey on them. Eels are said to descend into the sea for the purpose of producing their young, which are seen returning into the fresh water by myriads, extremely small in size, but possessing the power of surmounting every obstacle which occurs in the course of a river, by applying their slimy and glutinous bodies to the surface of rocks, or the gates of a lock, even when dry, and so climbing over it.* Before the year 1800 there were no eels in Lake Wener, the largest inland lake in Sweden, which discharges its waters by the celebrated cataracts of Trolhättan. But I am informed by Professor Nilsson that since the canal was opened uniting the river Gotha with the lake by a series of nine locks, each of great height, eels have been observed in abundance in the lake. It appears, therefore, that though they were unable to ascend the falls, they have made their way by the locks, by which in a very short space a difference of level of 114 feet is overcome.

---

* Sur les Habitations des Animaux Marins.—Ann. du Mus., tom. xv., cited by Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 51.

† Malte-Brun, vol. i. p. 507.

‡ Ibid.

Gmelin says, that the anseres (wild geese, ducks, and others) subsist, in their migrations, on the spawn of fish; and that oftentimes, when they void the spawn, two or three days afterwards, the eggs retain their vitality unimpaired.† When there are many disconnected freshwater lakes in a mountainous region, at various elevations, each remote from the other, it has often been deemed inconceivable how they could all become stocked with fish from one common source; but it has been suggested, that the minute eggs of these animals may sometimes be entangled in the feathers of water-fowl. These, when they alight to wash and plume themselves in the water, may often unconsciously contribute to propagate swarms of fish, which, in due season, will supply them with food. Some of the water-beetles, also, as the dyticidæ, are amphibious, and in the evening quit their lakes and pools, and, flying in the air, transport the minute ova of fishes to distant waters,

---

* Phil. Trans., 1747, p. 395.

† Amœn. Acad., Essay 75.

In this manner some naturalists account for the fry of fish appearing occasionally in small pools caused by heavy rains.

### *Geographical Distribution and Migrations of Testacea.*

The testacea, of which so great a variety of species occurs in the sea, are a class of animals of peculiar importance to the geologist; because their remains are found in strata of all ages, and generally in a higher state of preservation than those of other organic beings. Climate has a decided influence on the geographical distribution of species in this class; but as there is much greater uniformity of temperature in the waters of the ocean, than in the atmosphere which invests the land, the diffusion of many marine molluscs is extensive.

*Causes which limit the extension of many species.*— Some forms, as those of the nautili, volutæ, and cyprææ, attain their fullest development in warm latitudes; and most of their species are exclusively confined to them. Péron and Lesueur remark, that the Haliotis gigantea of Van Diemen's Land, and the Phasianella, diminish in size as they follow the coasts of New Holland to King George's Sound, and entirely disappear beyond them.* Almost all the species of South American shells differ from those of the Indian Archipelago in the same latitudes; and on the shores of many of the islands of the South Pacific, peculiar species have been obtained. But we are as yet by no means able to sketch out the submarine provinces of shells, as the botanist has done those of the terrestrial, and even of the subaqueous plants. There can be little doubt, however, that the boundaries in this case, both of latitude and longitude, will be found in general well defined. The continuous lines of continents, stretching from north to south, prevent a particular species from belting the globe, and following the direction of the isothermal lines. The inhabitants of the West Indian seas, for example, cannot enter the Pacific, without passing round through the inclement climate of Cape Horn. Currents also flowing permanently in certain directions, and the influx at certain points of great bodies of fresh water, limit the extension of many species. Those which love deep water are arrested by shoals; others, fitted for shallow seas, cannot migrate across unfathomable abysses.

---

* Ann. du Mus. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xv.

*Great range of some species.* — Some few species, however, have an immense range, as the *Bulla aperta*, for example, which is found in almost all zones. The habitation of the *Bulla striata* extends from the shores of Egypt to the coasts of England and France, and it recurs again in the seas of Senegal, Brazil, and the West Indies. The *Turbo petræus* inhabits the seas of England, Guadaloupe, and the Cape of Good Hope *, and many instances of a similar kind might be enumerated.

The *Ianthina fragilis* has wandered into almost every sea, both tropical and temperate. This " common oceanic snail " derives its buoyancy from an admirably contrived float, which has enabled it not only to disperse itself so universally, but to become an active agent in disseminating other species, which attach themselves, or their ova, to its shell.†

---

* Fér. Art. Géogr. Phys. Dict. Class. d'Hist. Nat.

† Mr. Broderip possesses specimens of *Ianthina fragilis*, bearing more than one species of barnacle (*Pentelasmis*) presented to

It is evident that, among the testacea, as in plants and the higher order of animals, there are species which have a power of enduring a wide range of temperature, whereas others cannot resist a considerable change of climate. Among the freshwater molluscs, and those which breathe air, Férussac mentions a few instances of species of almost universal diffusion.

The Helix putris (*Succinea putris*,* Lam.), so common in Europe, where it reaches from Norway to Italy, is also found in Egypt, in the United States, in Newfoundland, Jamaica, Tranquebar, and, it is even said, in the Marianne Isles. As this animal inhabits constantly the borders of pools and streams where there is much moisture, it is not impossible that different water-fowl have been the agents of spreading some of its minute eggs, which may have been entangled in their feathers. *Helix aspersa*, one of the commonest of our larger land-shells, is found in South America, at the foot of Chimborazo, as also in Cayenne. Some conchologists have conjectured that it was accidentally imported in some ship; for it is an eatable species, and these animals are capable of retaining life during long voyages, without air or nourishment.*

---

him by Captain King and Lieutenant Graves. One of these specimens, taken alive by Captain King far at sea, and a little north of the equator, is so loaded with those cirrhipeds, and with numerous ova, that all the upper part of its shell is invisible.

* Four individuals of a large species of land shell (*Bulimus*), from Valparaiso, were brought to England by Lieutenant Graves, who accompanied Captain King in his late expedition to the Straits of Magellan. They had been packed up in a box, and enveloped in cotton; two for a space of thirteen, one for seventeen, and a fourth for upwards of twenty months; but, on being exposed by Mr. Broderip to the warmth of a fire in London, and

*Confined range of others.* — Mr. Lowe, in a memoir published in the Cambridge Transactions in 1831, enumerates seventy-one species of land mollusca, collected by him in the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo, sixty of which belonged to the genus Helix alone, including as sub-genera Bulimus and Achatina, and excluding Vitrina and Clausilia; — forty-four of these are new. It is remarkable, that very few of the above-mentioned species are common to the neighbouring archipelago of the Canaries; but it is a still more striking fact, that, of the sixty species of the three genera above mentioned, thirty-one are natives of Porto Santo; whereas, in Madeira, which contains ten times the superficies, were found but twenty-nine. Of these only four were common to the two islands, which are separated by a distance of only twelve leagues; and two even of these four (namely, *Helix rhodostoma* and *H. ventrosa*) are species of general diffusion, common to Madeira, the Canaries, and the South of Europe.*

The confined range of these molluscs may easily be explained, if we admit that species have only one birth-place; and the only problem to be solved would relate to the exceptions — to account for the dissemination of some species throughout several islands, and the European continent. May not the eggs, when washed into the sea by the undermining of cliffs, or blown by a storm from the land, float uninjured to a distant shore?

*Their mode of diffusion.* — Notwithstanding the proverbially slow motion of snails and molluscs in

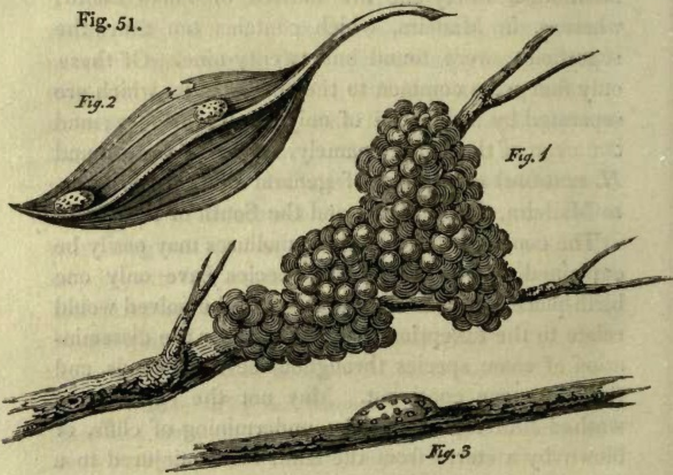
---

provided with tepid water and leaves, they revived, and lived for several months in Mr. Loddiges' palm-house.

* Camb. Phil. Trans., vol. iv., 1831.

general, and although many aquatic species adhere constantly to the same rock for their whole lives, they are by no means destitute of provision for disseminating themselves rapidly over a wide area. Some lay their eggs in a sponge-like nidus, wherein the young remain enveloped for a time after their birth; and this buoyant substance floats far and wide as readily as sea-weed. The young of other viviparous tribes are often borne along, entangled in sea-weed. Sometimes they are so light, that, like grains of sand, they can be easily moved by currents. Balani and serpulæ are

Fig. 51.



*Eggs of fresh-water Molluscs.*

Fig. 1. Eggs of Ampullaria ovata (a fluviatile species), fixed to a small sprig which had fallen into the water.

Fig. 2. Eggs of Planorbis albus, attached to a dead leaf lying under water.

Fig. 3. Eggs of the common Limneus (L. vulgaris), adhering to a dead stick under water.

sometimes found adhering to floating cocoa-nuts, and even to fragments of pumice. In rivers and lakes, on the other hand, aquatic univalves usually attach their eggs to leaves and sticks which have fallen into the water, and which are liable to be swept away during floods, from tributaries to the main streams, and from thence to all parts of the same basins. Particular species may thus migrate during one season from the head waters of the Mississippi, or any other great river, to countries bordering the sea, at the distance of many thousand miles.

An illustration of the mode of attachment of these eggs will be seen in the annexed cut. (Fig. 51.)

The habit of some testacea to adhere to floating wood is proved by their fixing themselves to the bottoms of ships. By this mode of conveyance *Mytilus polymorphus* has been brought from northern Europe to the Commercial Docks in the Thames, where the species is now domiciled.

A lobster (*Astacus marinus*) was lately taken alive covered with living mussels (*Mytilus edulis*)*; and a large female crab (*Cancer pagurus*), covered with oysters, and bearing also Anomia ephippium, and actiniæ, was taken in April, 1832, off the English coast. The oysters, seven in number, include individuals of six years' growth, and the two largest are four inches long and three inches and a half broad. Both the crab and the oysters were seen alive by Mr. Robert Brown.†

---

* The specimen is preserved in the Museum of the Zool. Soc. of London.

† This specimen is in the collection of my friend Mr. Broderip, who observes, that this crab, which was apparently in perfect health, could not have cast her shell for six years, whereas some naturalists

From this example we learn the manner in which oysters may be diffused over every part of the sea where the crab wanders; and if they are at length carried to a spot where there is nothing but fine mud, the foundation of a new oyster-bank may be laid on the death of the crab. In this instance the oysters survived the crab many days, and were killed at last only by long exposure to the air.

### *Geographical Distribution and Migrations of Zoophytes.*

Zoophytes are very imperfectly known, but there can be little doubt that each maritime region possesses species peculiar to itself. The madrepores, or lamelliferous polyparia, are found in their fullest development only in the tropical seas of Polynesia and the East and West Indies; and this family is represented only by a few species in our seas. Those even of the Mediterranean are inferior in size; and, for the most part, different from such as inhabit the tropics. Péron and Lesueur, after studying the Holothuriæ, Medusæ, and other congeners of delicate and changeable forms, came to the conclusion that each kind has its place of residence determined by the temperature necessary to support its existence. Thus, for example, they found the abode of Pyrosoma Atlantica to be confined to one particular region of the Atlantic Ocean.*

Let us now inquire how the transportation of polyps from one part of the globe to another is effected.

---

have stated that the species moults annually, without limiting the moulting period to the early stages of growth of the animal.

* Voy. aux Terres Australes, tome i. p. 492.

Many of them, as in the families Flustra and Sertularia, attach themselves to sea-weed, and are occasionally drifted along with it. Many fix themselves to the shells of gasteropods, and are thus borne along by them to short distances. Some polyps, like the sea-pens, float about in the sea, although naturalists are not agreed whether or not they possess powers of spontaneous motion. But the most frequent mode of transportation consists in the buoyancy of their eggs, or certain small vesicles, which are detached, and are capable of becoming the foundation of a new colony. These gems, as they are called, have in many instances a locomotive power of their own, by which they proceed in a determinate direction for several days after separation from the parent. They are propelled by means of numerous short threads or hairs, which are in constant and rapid vibration; and, when thus supported in the water, they may be borne along by currents to a great distance.

That some zoophytes adhere to floating bodies, is proved by their being found attached to the bottoms of ships, like certain testacea before alluded to.

### *Geographical Distribution and Migrations of Insects.*

Before I conclude this sketch of the manner in which the habitable parts of the earth are shared out among particular assemblages of organic beings, I must offer a few remarks on insects, which, by their numbers and the variety of their powers and instincts, exert a prodigious influence in the economy of animate nature. As a large portion of these minute creatures are strictly dependent for their subsistence on certain species of vegetables, the entomological provinces must coincide in a considerable degree with the botanical.

All the insects, says Latreille, brought from the eastern parts of Asia and China, whatever be their latitude and temperature, are distinct from those of Europe and of Africa. The insects of the United States, although often they approach very close to our own, are nevertheless specifically distinguishable by some characters. In South America, the equinoctial lands of New Granada and Peru on the one side, and of Guiana on the other, contain for the most part distinct groups; the Andes forming the division, and interposing a narrow line of severe cold between climates otherwise very similar.*

*Migratory instincts.* — The insects of the United States, even those of the northern provinces as far as Canada, differ specifically from the European; while those of Greenland appear to be in a great measure identical with our own. Some insects are very local; while a few, on the contrary, are common to remote countries, between which the torrid zone and the ocean intervene. Thus our painted lady butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*) re-appears in New Holland and Japan with scarcely a varying streak.† The same species is said to be one of the few insects which are universally dispersed over the earth, being found in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; and its wide range is the more interesting, because it seems explained by its migratory instinct, seconded, no doubt, by a capacity, enjoyed by few species, of enduring a great diversity of temperature.

A vast swarm of this species, forming a column from ten to fifteen feet broad, was, a few years since, observed in the Canton de Vaud; they traversed the country with great rapidity from north to south, all flying onwards in regular order, close together, and not turning from their course on the approach of other objects. Professor Bonelli, of Turin, observed in March of the same year, a similar swarm of the same species, also directing their flight from north to south, in Piedmont, in such immense numbers that at night the flowers were literally covered with them. They had been traced from Coni, Raconi, Susa, &c. A similar flight at the end of the last century is recorded by M. Louch, in the Memoirs of the Academy of Turin. The fact is the more worthy of notice, because the caterpillars of this butterfly are not gregarious, but solitary from the moment that they are hatched; and this instinct remains dormant, while generation after generation passes away, till it suddenly displays itself in full energy when their numbers happen to be in excess.

---

* Géographie Générale des Insectes et des Arachnides. Mém. du Mus. d'Hist. Nat., tome iii.

† Kirby and Spence, vol. iv. p. 487.

Not only peculiar species, but certain types, distinguish particular countries; and there are groups, observes Kirby, which represent each other in distant regions, whether in their form, their functions, or in both. Thus the honey and wax of Europe, Asia, and Africa, are in each case prepared by bees congenerous with our common hive-bee (*Apis*, Latr.); while, in America, this genus is nowhere indigenous, but is replaced by Melipona, Trigona, and Euglossa; and in New Holland by a still different, but undescribed type.* The European bee (*Apis mellifica*), although not a native of the new world, is now established, both in

---

* Kirby and Spence, vol. iv. p. 497.

North and South America. It was introduced into the United States by some of the early settlers, and has since overspread the vast forests of the interior, building hives in the decayed trunks of trees. "The Indians," says Irving, "consider them as the harbinger of the white man as the buffalo is of the red man, and say that in proportion as the bee advances the Indian and the buffalo retire. It is said," continues the same writer, "that the wild bee is seldom to be met with at any great distance from the frontier, and that they have always been the heralds of civilization, preceding it as it advanced from the Atlantic borders. Some of the ancient settlers of the west even pretend to give the very year when the honey-bee first crossed the Mississippi."*

As almost all insects are winged, they can readily spread themselves wherever their progress is not opposed by uncongenial climates, or by seas, mountains, and other physical impediments; and these barriers they can sometimes surmount by abandoning themselves to violent winds, which, as I before stated, when speaking of floating seeds, may in a few hours carry them to very considerable distances. On the Andes some sphinxes and flies have been observed by Humboldt, at the height of 19,180 feet above the sea, and which appeared to him to have been involuntarily carried into these regions by ascending currents of air.†

White mentions a remarkable shower of aphides which seem to have emigrated, with an east wind, from the great hop plantations of Kent and Sussex, and blackened the shrubs and vegetables where they alighted at Selbourne, spreading at the same time in great clouds all along the vale from Farnham to Alton. These aphides are sometimes accompanied by vast numbers of the common lady-bird (*Coccinella septem-punctata*), which feed upon them.[*]

---

* Washington Irving's Tour in the Prairies, ch. ix.

† Description of the Equatorial Regions — Malte-Brun, vol. v. p. 379.

It is remarkable, says Kirby, that many of the insects which are occasionally observed to emigrate, as, for instance, the libellulæ, coccinellæ, carabi, cicadæ, &c. are not usually social insects; but seem to congregate, like swallows, merely for the purpose of emigration.[†] Here, therefore, we have an example of an instinct developing itself on certain rare emergencies, causing unsocial species to become gregarious, and to venture sometimes even to cross the ocean.

The armies of locusts which darken the air in Africa and traverse the globe from Turkey to our southern counties in England, are well known to all. When the western gales sweep over the Pampas, they bear along with them myriads of insects of various kinds. As a proof of the manner in which species may be thus diffused, I may mention that when the Creole frigate was lying in the outer roads off Buenos Ayres, in 1819, at the distance of six miles from the land, her decks and rigging were suddenly covered with thousands of flies and grains of sand. The sides of the vessel had just received a fresh coat of paint, to which the insects adhered in such numbers as to spot and disfigure the vessel, and to render it necessary partially to renew the paint.[‡] Captain W. H. Smyth was obliged to repaint his vessel, the Adventure, in the Mediterranean, from the same cause. He was on his way from Malta to Tripoli, when a southern wind blowing from the coast of Africa, then one hundred miles distant, drove such myriads of flies upon the fresh paint, that not the smallest point was left unoccupied by insects.

---

[*] Kirby and Spence, vol. ii. p. 9. 1817. [†] Ibid. p. 12.

[‡] I am indebted to Lieutenant Graves, R.N., for this information.

To the southward of the river Plate, off Cape St. Antonio, and at the distance of fifty miles from land, several large dragon-flies alighted on the Adventure frigate, during Captain King's late expedition to the Straits of Magellan. If the wind abates when insects are thus crossing the sea, the most delicate species are not necessarily drowned; for many can repose without sinking on the water. The slender long-legged tipulæ have been seen standing on the surface of the sea, when driven out far from our coast, and took wing immediately on being approached.* Exotic beetles are sometimes thrown on our shore, which revive after having been long drenched in salt water; and the periodical appearance of some conspicuous butterflies amongst us, after being unseen for five or fifty years, has been ascribed, not without probability, to the agency of the winds.

Inundations of rivers, observes Kirby, if they happen at any season except in the depth of winter, always carry down a number of insects, floating on the surface of bits of stick, weeds, &c.; so that when the waters subside, the entomologist may generally reap a plentiful harvest. In the dissemination, moreover, of these minute beings, as in that of plants, the larger animals play their part. Insects are, in numberless instances, borne along in the coats of animals, or the feathers of birds; and the eggs of some species are capable, like seeds, of resisting the digestive powers of the stomach, and after they are swallowed with herbage, may be ejected again unharmed in the dung.

---

* I state this fact on the authority of my friend, Mr. John Curtis.

### *Geographical Distribution and Diffusion of Man.*

I have reserved for the last some observations on the range and diffusion of the human species over the earth, and the influence of man in spreading other animals and plants, especially the terrestrial.

Many naturalists have amused themselves in speculating on the probable birth-place of mankind, the point from which, if we assume the whole human race to have descended from a single pair, the tide of emigration must originally have proceeded. It has been always a favourite conjecture, that this birth-place was situated within or near the tropics, where perpetual summer reigns, and where fruits, herbs, and roots are plentifully supplied throughout the year. The climate of these regions, it has been said, is suited to a being born without any covering, and who had not yet acquired the arts of building habitations or providing clothes.

*Progress of human population.*—"The hunter state," it has been argued, "which Montesquieu placed the first, was probably only the second stage to which mankind arrived; since so many arts must have been invented to catch a salmon, or a deer, that society could no longer have been in its infancy when they came into use."* When regions where the spontaneous fruits of the earth abound became overpeopled, men would naturally diffuse themselves over the neighbouring parts of the temperate zone; but a considerable time would probably elapse before this event took place; and it is possible, as a writer before cited observes, that in the interval before the multiplication of their numbers and their increasing wants had compelled them to emigrate, some arts to take animals were invented, but far inferior to what we see practised at this day among savages. As their habitations gradually advanced into the temperate zone, the new difficulties they had to encounter would call forth by degrees the spirit of invention, and the probability of such inventions always rises with the number of people involved in the same necessity.*

---

* Brand's Select Dissert. from the Amœn. Acad., vol. i. p. 118.

A distinguished modern writer, who coincides for the most part in the views above mentioned, has introduced one of the persons in his second dialogue as objecting to the theory of the human race having gradually advanced from a savage to a civilized state, on the ground that "the first man must have inevitably been destroyed by the elements or devoured by savage beasts, so infinitely his superiors in physical force."† He then contends against the difficulty here started by various arguments, all of which were, perhaps, superfluous; for if a philosopher is pleased to indulge in conjectures on this subject, why should he not assign, as the original seat of man, some one of those large islands within the tropics, which are as free from wild beasts as Van Diemen's Land or Australia? Here man may have remained for a period, peculiar to a single island, just as some of the large anthropomorphous species are now limited to one island within the tropics. In such a situation, the new-born race might have lived in security, though far more helpless than the New Holland savages, and might have found abundance of vegetable food. Colonies may afterwards have been sent forth from this mother country, and then the peopling of the earth may have proceeded according to the hypothesis before alluded to.

---

* Brand's Select Dissert. from the Amœn. Acad., vol. i. p. 118.

† Sir H. Davy, Consolations in Travel, p. 74.

In an early stage of society the necessity of hunting acts as a principle of repulsion, causing men to spread with the greatest rapidity over a country, until the whole is covered with scattered settlements. It has been calculated that eight hundred acres of hunting-ground produce only as much food as half an acre of arable land. When the game has been in a great measure exhausted, and a state of pasturage succeeds, the several hunter tribes, being already scattered, may multiply in a short time into the greatest number which the pastoral state is capable of sustaining. The necessity, says Brand, thus imposed upon the two savage states, of dispersing themselves far and wide over the country, affords a reason why, at a very early period, the worst parts of the earth may have become inhabited.

But this reason, it may be said, is only applicable in as far as regards the peopling of a continuous continent; whereas the smallest islands, however remote from continents, have almost invariably been found inhabited by man. St. Helena, it is true, afforded an exception; for when that island was discovered in 1501, it was only inhabited by sea-fowl, and occasionally by seals and turtles, and was covered with a forest of trees and shrubs, all of species peculiar to it, with one or two exceptions, and which seem to have been expressly created for this remote and insulated spot.*

*Drifting of canoes to vast distances.* — But very few of the numerous coral islets and volcanos of the vast Pacific, capable of sustaining a few families of men, have been found untenanted; and we have, therefore, to inquire whence and by what means, if all the members of the great human family have had one common source, could those savages have migrated. Cook, Forster, and others, have remarked that parties of savages in their canoes must often have lost their way, and must have been driven on distant shores, where they were forced to remain, deprived both of the means and of the requisite intelligence for returning to their own country. Thus Captain Cook found on the island of Wateoo three inhabitants of Otaheite, who had been drifted thither in a canoe, although the distance between the two isles is 550 miles. In 1696, two canoes, containing thirty persons, who had left Ancorso, were thrown by contrary winds and storms on the island of Samar, one of the Philippines, at a distance of 800 miles. In 1721, two canoes, one of which contained twenty-four, and the other six persons, men, women, and children, were drifted from an island called Farroilep to the island of Guaham, one of the Marians, a distance of 200 miles.†

Kotzebue, when investigating the Coral Isles of Radack, at the eastern extremity of the Caroline Isles, became acquainted with a person of the name of Kadu, who was a native of Ulea, an isle 1500 miles distant, from which he had been drifted with a party. Kadu and three of his countrymen one day left Ulea in a sailing boat, when a violent storm arose, and drove them out of their course; they drifted about the open sea for eight months, according to their reckoning by the moon, making a knot on a cord at every new moon. Being expert fishermen, they subsisted entirely on the produce of the sea; and when the rain fell, laid in as much fresh water as they had vessels to contain it. "Kadu," says Kotzebue, "who was the best diver, frequently went down to the bottom of the sea, where it is well known that the water is not so salt, with a cocoa-nut shell, with only a small opening."* When these unfortunate men reached the isles of Radack, every hope and almost every feeling had died within them; their sail had long been destroyed, their canoe had long been the sport of winds and waves, and they were picked up by the inhabitants of Aur, in a state of insensibility; but by the hospitable care of those islanders they soon recovered, and were restored to perfect health.†

---

* See Vol. III. p. 28.

† Malte-Brun's Geography, vol. iii. p. 419.

Captain Beechey, in his late voyage to the Pacific, fell in with some natives of the Coral Islands, who had in a similar manner been carried to a great distance from their native country. They had embarked, to the number of 150 souls, in three double canoes, from Anaa, or Chain Island, situated about three hundred miles to the eastward of Otaheite. They were overtaken by the monsoon, which dispersed the canoes;

---

* Chamisso states that the water which they brought up was cooler, and, *in their opinion*, less salt. It is difficult to conceive its being fresher near the bottom, except where submarine springs may happen to rise.

† Kotzebue's Voyage, 1815—1818. Quarterly Review, vol. xxvi. p. 361.

and, after driving them about the ocean, left them becalmed, so that a great number of persons perished. Two of the canoes were never heard of, but the other was drifted from one uninhabited island to another, at each of which the voyagers obtained a few provisions; and at length, after having wandered for a distance of 600 miles, they were found and carried to their home in the Blossom.*

The space traversed in some of these instances was so great, that similar accidents might suffice to transport canoes from various parts of Africa to the shores of South America, or from Spain to the Azores, and thence to North America: so that man, even in a rude state of society, is liable to be scattered involuntarily by the winds and waves over the globe, in a manner singularly analogous to that in which many plants and animals are diffused. We ought not, then, to wonder, that during the ages required for some tribes of the human race to attain that advanced stage of civilization which empowers the navigator to cross the ocean in all directions with security, the whole earth should have become the abode of rude tribes of hunters and fishers. Were the whole of mankind now cut off, with the exception of one family, inhabiting the old or new continent, or Australia, or even some coral islet of the Pacific, we might expect their descendants, though they should never become more enlightened than the South Sea Islanders or the Esquimaux, to spread in the course of ages over the whole earth, diffused partly by the tendency of population to increase, in a limited district, beyond the means of subsistence, and partly by the accidental drifting of canoes by tides and currents to distant shores.

---

* Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific, &c., in the years 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, p. 170.

### *Involuntary Influence of Man in diffusing Animals and Plants.*

Many of the general remarks which have been made respecting the influence of man in spreading or in checking the diffusion of plants, apply equally to his relations with the animal kingdom. On a future occasion, I shall be led to speak of the instrumentality of our species in naturalizing useful animals and plants in new regions, when explaining my views of the effects which the spreading and increase of certain species exert in the extirpation of others. At present I shall confine myself to a few remarks on the involuntary aid which man lends to the dissemination of species.

In the mammiferous class our influence is chiefly displayed in increasing the number of quadrupeds which are serviceable to us, and in exterminating or reducing the number of those which are noxious.

Sometimes, however, we unintentionally promote the multiplication of inimical species, as when we introduced the rat, which was not indigenous in the new world, into all parts of America. They have been conveyed over in ships, and now infest a great multitude of islands and parts of that continent. In like manner the Norway rat has been imported into England, where it plunders our property in ships and houses.

Among birds, the house sparrow may be cited as a species known to have extended its range with the tillage of the soil. During the last century it has spread gradually over Asiatic Russia towards the north and east, always following the progress of cultivation. It made its first appearance on the Irtisch in Tobolsk, soon after the Russians had ploughed the land. It came in 1735 up the Obi to Beresow, and four years after to Naryn, about fifteen degrees of longitude farther east. In 1710, it had been seen in the higher parts of the course of the Lena, in the government of Irkutzk. In all these places it is now common, but is not yet found in the uncultivated regions of Kamtschatka.*

The great viper (*Fer de lance*), a species no less venomous than the rattle-snake, which now ravages Martinique and St. Lucia, was accidentally introduced by man, and exists in no other part of the West Indies.

Many parasitic insects which attack our persons, and some of which are supposed to be peculiar to our species, have been carried into all parts of the earth, and have as high a claim as man to an *universal* geographical distribution.

A great variety of insects have been transported in ships from one country to another, especially in warmer latitudes. Notwithstanding the coldness of our climate, we have been unable to prevent the cockroach (*Blatta orientalis*) from entering and diffusing itself in our ovens and kneading troughs, and availing itself of the artificial warmth which we afford. It is well known also that beetles, and many other kinds of ligniperdous insects, have been introduced into Great Britain in timber; especially several North American species. "The commercial relations," says Malte-Brun*, "between France and India, have transported from the latter country the aphis which destroys the apple-tree, and two sorts of Neuroptera, the *lucifuga* and *flavicola*, mostly confined to Provence and the neighbourhood of Bourdeaux, where they devour the timber in the houses and naval arsenals."

---

* Gloger, Abänd. der Vögel, p. 103.; Pallas, Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 197.

Among molluscs we may mention the *Teredo navalis*, which is a native of equatorial seas, but which, by adhering to the bottom of ships, was transported to Holland, where it has been most destructive to vessels and piles. The same species has also become naturalized in England, and other countries enjoying an extensive commerce. *Bulimus undatus*, a land species of considerable size, native of Jamaica and other West Indian islands, has been imported, adhering to tropical timber, into Liverpool; and, as I learn from Mr. Broderip, is now naturalized in the woods near that town.

In all these and innumerable other instances we may regard the involuntary agency of man as strictly analogous to that of the inferior animals. Like them, we unconsciously contribute to extend or limit the geographical range and numbers of certain species, in obedience to general rules in the economy of nature, which are for the most part beyond our control.

---

* Syst. of Geog., vol. viii. p. 169.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## THEORIES RESPECTING THE ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION OF SPECIES.

**Proposal of an hypothesis on this subject — Supposed centres or foci of creation — Why distinct provinces of animals and plants have not become more blended together — Brocchi's speculations on the loss of species (p. 104.) — Stations of plants and animals — Causes on which they depend — Stations of plants, how affected by animals — Equilibrium in the number of species, how preserved — Peculiar efficacy of insects in this task (p. 110.) — Rapidity with which certain insects multiply or decrease in numbers — Effect of omnivorous animals in preserving the equilibrium of species (p. 118.).—Reciprocal influence of aquatic and terrestrial species on each other.**

*Theory of Linnæus.*—It would be superfluous to examine the various attempts which were made to explain the phenomena of the distribution of species alluded to in the preceding chapters, in the infancy of the sciences of botany, zoology, and physical geography. The theories or rather conjectures then indulged now stand refuted by a simple statement of facts; and if Linnæus were living he would be the first to renounce the notions which he promulgated. For he imagined the habitable world to have been for a certain time limited to one small tract, the only portion of the earth's surface that was as yet laid bare by the subsidence of the primæval ocean. In this fertile spot he supposed the originals of all the species of plants which exist on this globe to have been congregated, together with the first ancestors of all animals and of the human race. "In quâ commodè habitaverint animalia omnia, et vegetabilia lætè germinaverint." In order to accommodate the various habitudes of so many creatures, and to provide a diversity of climate suited to their several natures, the tract in which the creation took place was supposed to have been situated in some warm region of the earth, but to have contained a lofty mountain range, on the heights and in the declivities of which were to be found all temperatures and every climate, from that of the torrid to that of the frozen zone.*

That there never was a universal ocean since the planet was inhabited, or, rather, since the oldest groups of strata yet known to contain organic remains were formed, is proved by the presence of terrestrial plants in all the older formations; and if this conclusion was not established, yet no geologist could deny that, since the first small portion of the earth was laid dry, there have been many entire changes in the species of plants and animals inhabiting the land.

But, without dwelling on the above and other refuted theories, let us inquire whether some hypothesis cannot be substituted as simple as that of Linnæus, to which the phenomena now ascertained in regard to the distribution both of aquatic and terrestrial species may be referred. The following may, perhaps, be reconcileable with known facts :— Each species may have had its origin in a single pair, or individual, where an individual was sufficient, and species may have been created in succession at such times and in such places as to enable them to multiply and endure for an appointed period, and occupy an appointed space on the globe.

---

* De terra habitabili incremento; also Prichard, Phys. Hist. of Mankind, vol. i. p. 17., where the hypotheses of different naturalists are enumerated.

In order to explain this theory, let us suppose every living thing to be destroyed in the western hemisphere, both on the land and in the ocean, and permission to be given to man to people this great desert, by transporting into it animals and plants from the eastern hemisphere, a strict prohibition being enforced against introducing two original stocks of the same species.

Now it is easy to show that the result of such a mode of colonizing would correspond exactly, so far as regards the grouping of animals and plants, with that now observed throughout the globe. In the first place, it would be necessary for naturalists, before they imported species into particular localities, to study attentively the climate and other physical conditions of each spot. It would be no less requisite to introduce the different species in succession, so that each plant and animal might have time and opportunity to multiply before the species destined to prey upon it was admitted. Many herbs and shrubs, for example, must spread far and wide before the sheep, the deer, and the goat could be allowed to enter, lest they should devour and annihilate the original stocks of many plants, and then perish themselves for want of food. The above-mentioned herbivorous animals in their turn must be permitted to make considerable progress before the entrance of the first pair of wolves or lions. Insects must be allowed to swarm before the swallow could be permitted to skim through the air, and feast on thousands at one repast.

It is evident that, however equally in this case our original stocks were distributed over the whole surface of land and water, there would nevertheless arise distinct botanical and zoological provinces, for there are a great many natural barriers which oppose common obstacles to the advance of a variety of species. Thus, for example, almost all the animals and plants naturalized by us, towards the extremity of South America, would be unable to spread beyond a certain limit, towards the east, west, and south; because they would be stopped by the ocean, and a few of them only would succeed in reaching the cooler latitudes of the northern hemisphere, because they would be incapable of bearing the heat of the tropics, through which they must pass. In the course of ages, undoubtedly, exceptions would arise, and some species might become common to the temperate and polar regions, or both sides of the equator; for I have before shown that the powers of diffusion conferred on some classes are very great. But we might confidently predict that these exceptions would never become so numerous as to invalidate the general rule.

Some of the plants and animals transplanted by us to the coast of Chili or Peru would never be able to cross the Andes, so as to reach the Eastern plains; nor, for a similar reason, would those first established in the Pampas, or the valleys of the Amazon and the Orinoco, ever arrive at the shores of the Pacific.

In the ocean an analogous state of things would prevail; for there, also, climate would exert a great influence in limiting the range of species, and the land would stop the migrations of aquatic tribes as effectually as the sea arrests the dispersion of the terrestrial.

As certain birds, insects, and the seeds of plants can never cross the direction of prevailing winds, so currents form natural barriers to the dissemination of many oceanic races. A line of shoals may be as impassable to deep-water species, as are the Alps and the Andes to plants and animals peculiar to plains; while deep abysses may prove insuperable obstacles to the migrations of the inhabitants of shallow waters.

*Supposed centres, or foci, of creation.* — It is worthy of observation, that one effect of the introduction of single pairs of each species must be the confined range of certain groups in spots, which, like small islands, or solitary inland lakes, have few means of interchanging their inhabitants with adjoining regions. Now this congregating, in a small space, of many peculiar species, would give an appearance of *centres* or *foci* of creation, as they have been termed, as if there were favourite points where the creative energy has been in greater action than in others, and where the numbers of peculiar organic beings have consequently become more considerable.

I do not mean to call in question the soundness of the inferences of some botanists, as to the former existence of certain limited spots whence species of plants have been propagated, radiating, as it were, in all directions from a common centre. On the contrary, I conceive these phenomena to be the necessary consequences of the plan of nature before suggested, operating during the successive mutations of the surface, some of which the geologist can prove to have taken place subsequently to the period when many species now existing were created. In order to exemplify how this arrangement of plants may have been produced, let us imagine that, about three centuries before the discovery of St. Helena (itself of submarine volcanic origin), a multitude of new islands had been thrown up in the surrounding sea, and that these had each become clothed with plants emigrating from St. Helena, in the same manner as the wild plants of Campania have diffused themselves over Monte Nuovo. Whenever the first botanist investigated the new archipelago, he would, in all probability, find a different assemblage of plants in each of the islands of recent formation; but, in St. Helena itself, he would meet with individuals of every species belonging to all parts of the archipelago, and some, in addition, peculiar to itself, viz., those which had not been able to obtain a passage into any one of the surrounding new-formed lands. In this case, it might be truly said that the original island was the primitive focus, or centre, of a certain type of vegetation; whereas, in the surrounding islands, there would be a smaller number of species, yet all belonging to the same group.

But this peculiar distribution of plants would not warrant the conclusion that, in the space occupied by St. Helena, there had been a greater exertion of creative power than in the spaces of equal area occupied by the new adjacent lands, because, within the period in which St. Helena had acquired its peculiar vegetation, each of the spots supposed to be subsequently converted into land may have been the birth-places of a great number of *marine* animals and plants, which may have had time to scatter themselves far and wide over the southern Atlantic.

*Why distinct provinces not more blended.* — Perhaps it may be objected to some parts of the foregoing train of reasoning, that during the lapse of past ages, especially during many partial revolutions of the globe of comparatively modern date, different zoological and botanical provinces ought to have become more confounded and blended together — that the distribution of species approaches too nearly to what might have been expected, if animals and plants had been introduced into the globe when its physical geography had already assumed the features which it now wears; whereas we know that, in certain districts, considerable geographical changes have taken place since species identical with those now in being were created.

*Brocchi's speculations on loss of species.* — These, and many kindred topics, cannot be fully discussed until we have considered, not merely the general laws which may regulate the first introduction of species, but those which may limit their *duration* on the earth. Brocchi, whose untimely death in Egypt is deplored by all who have the progress of geology at heart, has remarked, when hazarding some interesting conjectures respecting "the loss of species," that a modern naturalist had no small assurance, who declared "that individuals alone were capable of destruction, and that species were so perpetuated that nature could not annihilate them, so long as the planet lasted, or at least that nothing less than the shock of a comet, or some similar disaster, could put an end to their existence."* The Italian geologist, on the contrary, had satisfied himself, that many species of testacea, which formerly inhabited the Mediterranean, had become extinct, although a great number of others, which had been the contemporaries of those lost races, still survived. He came to the opinion, that about half the species which peopled the waters when the Subapennine strata were deposited had gone out of existence; and in this inference he does not appear to have been far wrong.

---

* Necker, Phytozool. Philosoph., p. 21. Brocchi, Conch. Foss. Subap., tome i. p. 229.

But, instead of seeking a solution of this problem, like some other geologists of his time, in a violent and general catastrophe, Brocchi endeavoured to imagine some regular and constant law by which species might be made to disappear from the earth gradually and in succession. The death, he suggested, of a species might depend, like that of individuals, on certain peculiaries of constitution conferred upon them at their birth; and as the longevity of the one depends on a certain force of vitality, which, after a period, grows weaker and weaker, so the duration of the other may be governed by the quantity of prolific power bestowed upon the species, which, after a season, may decline in energy, so that the fecundity and multiplication of individuals may be gradually lessened from century to century, "until that fatal term arrives when the embryo, incapable of extending and developing itself, abandons, almost at the instant of its formation, the slender principle of life by which it was scarcely animated, — and so all dies with it."

Now we might coincide in opinion with the Italian naturalist, as to the gradual extinction of species one after another, by the operation of regular and constant causes, without admitting an inherent principle of deterioration in their physiological attributes. We might concede, "that many species are on the decline, and that the day is not far distant when they will cease to exist;" yet deem it consistent with what we know of the nature of organic beings, to believe that the last individuals of each species retain their prolific powers in their full intensity.

Brocchi has himself speculated on the share which a change of climate may have had in rendering the Mediterranean unfit for the habitation of certain testacea, which still continued to thrive in the Indian Ocean, and of others which were now only represented by analogous forms within the tropics. He must also have been aware that other extrinsic causes, such as the progress of human population, or the increase of some one of the inferior animals, might gradually lead to the extirpation of a particular species, although its fecundity might remain to the last unimpaired. If, therefore, amid the vicissitudes of the animate and inanimate world, there are known causes capable of bringing about the decline and extirpation of species, it became him thoroughly to investigate the full extent to which these might operate, before he speculated on any cause of so purely hypothetical a kind as "the diminution of the prolific virtue."

If it could have been shown that some wild plant had insensibly dwindled away and died out, as sometimes happens to cultivated varieties propagated by cuttings, even though climate, soil, and every other circumstance should continue identically the same— if any animal had perished while the physical condition of the earth, and the number and force of its foes, with every other extrinsic cause, remained unaltered, then might we have some ground for suspecting that the infirmities of age creep on as naturally on species as upon individuals. But, in the absence of such observations, let us turn to another class of facts, and examine attentively the circumstances which determine the *stations* of particular animals and plants, and perhaps we shall discover, in the vicissitudes to which these stations are exposed, a cause fully adequate to explain the phenomena under consideration.

*Stations of plants and animals.*—Stations comprehend all the circumstances, whether relating to the animate or inanimate world, which determine whether a given plant or animal can exist in a given place; so that if it be shown that stations can become essentially modified by the influence of known causes, it will follow that species, as well as individuals, are mortal.

Every naturalist is familiar with the fact, that although in a particular country, such as Great Britain, there may be more than three thousand species of plants, ten thousand insects, and a great variety in each of the other classes; yet there will not be more than a hundred, perhaps not half that number, inhabiting any given locality. There may be no want of space in the supposed tract: it may be a large mountain, or an extensive moor, or a great river-plain, containing room enough for individuals of every species in our island; yet the spot will be occupied by a few to the exclusion of many, and these few are enabled, throughout long periods, to maintain their ground successfully against every intruder, notwithstanding the facilities which species enjoy, by virtue of their power of diffusion, of invading adjacent territories.

The principal causes which enable a certain assemblage of plants thus to maintain their ground against all others depend, as is well known, on the relations between the physiological nature of each species, and the climate, exposure, soil, and other physical conditions of the locality. Some plants live only on rocks, others in meadows, a third class in marshes. Of the latter, some delight in a fresh-water morass,—others in salt marshes, where their roots may copiously absorb saline particles. Some prefer an alpine region in a warm latitude, where, during the heat of summer, they are constantly irrigated by the cool waters of melting snows. To others loose sand, so fatal to the generality of species, affords the most proper station. The *Carex arenaria* and the *Elymus arenarius* acquire their full vigour on a sandy dune, obtaining an ascendancy over the very plants which in a stiff clay would immediately stifle them.

Where the soil of a district is of so peculiar a nature that it is extremely favourable to certain species, and agrees ill with every other, the former get exclusive possession of the ground, and, as in the case of heaths, live in societies. In like manner the Bog moss (*Sphagnum palustre*) is fully developed in peaty swamps, and becomes, like the heath, in the language of botanists, a social plant. Such monopolies, however, are not common, for they are checked by various causes. Not only are many species endowed with equal powers to obtain and keep possession of similar stations, but each plant, for reasons not fully explained by the physiologist, has the property of rendering the soil where it has grown less fitted for the support of other individuals of its own species, or even other species of the same family. Yet the same spot, so far from being impoverished, is improved, for plants of *another* family. Animals also interfere most actively to preserve an equilibrium in the vegetable kingdom.

*Equilibrium in the number of species, how preserved.*—" All the plants of a given country," says De Candolle, in his usual spirited style, "are at war one with another. The first which establish themselves by chance in a particular spot tend, by the mere occupancy of space, to exclude other species—the greater choke the smaller; the longest livers replace those which last for a shorter period; the more prolific gradually make themselves masters of the ground, which species multiplying more slowly would otherwise fill."

In this continual strife, it is not always the resources of the plant itself which enable it to maintain or extend its ground. Its success depends, in a great measure, on the number of its foes or allies, among the animals and plants inhabiting the same region. Thus, for example, a herb which loves the shade may multiply, if some tree with spreading boughs and dense foliage flourish in the neighbourhood. Another, which, if unassisted, would be overpowered by the rank growth of some hardy competitor, is secure; because its leaves are unpalatable to cattle, which, on the other hand, annually crop down its antagonist, and rarely suffer it to ripen its seed.

Oftentimes we see some herb which has flowered in the midst of a thorny shrub, when all the other individuals of the same species, in the open fields around, are eaten down, and cannot bring their seed to maturity. In this case, the shrub has lent his armour of spines and prickles to protect the defenceless herb against the mouths of the cattle; and thus a few individuals which occupied, perhaps, the most unfavourable station in regard to exposure, soil, and other circumstances, may, nevertheless, by the aid of an ally, become the principal source whereby the winds are supplied with seeds which perpetuate the species throughout the surrounding tract.

In the above example we see one plant shielding another from the attacks of animals; but instances are, perhaps, still more numerous, where some animal defends a plant against the enmity of some other subject of the vegetable kingdom.

Scarcely any beast, observes a Swedish naturalist, will touch the nettle, but fifty different kinds of insects are fed by it.* Some of these seize upon the root, others upon the stem; some eat the leaves; others devour the seeds and flowers: but for this multitude of enemies, the nettle would annihilate a great number of plants. Linnæus tells us, in his Tour in Scania, that goats were turned into an island which abounded with the *Agrostis arundinacea*, where they perished by famine; but horses which followed them grew fat on the same plant. The goat, also, he says, thrives on the meadow-sweet, and water-hemlock, plants which are injurious to cattle.†

*Agency of insects.* — Every plant, observes Wilcke, has its proper insect allotted to it to curb its luxuriancy, and to prevent it from multiplying to the exclusion of others. "Thus grass in meadows sometimes flourishes so as to exclude all other plants: here the Phalæna graminis (*Bombyx gram.*), with her numerous progeny, find a well-spread table; they multiply in immense numbers, and the farmer for some years laments the failure of his crop; but, the grass being consumed, the moths die with hunger, or remove to another place. Now the quantity of grass being greatly diminished, the other plants, which were before choked by it, spring up, and the ground becomes variegated with a multitude of different species of flowers. Had not nature given a commission to this minister for that purpose, the grass would destroy a great number of species of vegetables, of which the equilibrium is now kept up."*

---

* Amœn. Acad. vol. vi. p.17. § 12.

† Ibid., vol. vii. p. 409.

In the above passage allusion is made to the ravages committed in 1740 and the two following years in many provinces in Sweden, by a most destructive insect. The same moth is said never to touch the fox-tail grass, so that it may be classed as a most active ally and benefactor of that species, and as peculiarly instrumental in preserving it in its present abundance.† A discovery of Rolander, cited in the treatise of Wilcke above mentioned, affords a good illustration of the checks and counter-checks which nature has appointed to preserve the balance of power amongst species. "The Phalæna strobilella has the fir cone assigned to it to deposit its eggs upon; the young caterpillars coming out of the shell consume the cone and superfluous seed; but, lest the destruction should be too general, the Ichneumon strobilellæ lays its eggs in the caterpillar, inserting its long tail in the openings of the cone till it touches the included insect, for its body is too large to enter. Thus it fixes its minute egg upon the caterpillar, which being hatched destroys it."‡

Entomologists enumerate many parallel cases where insects, appropriated to certain plants, are kept down by other insects, and these again by parasites expressly appointed to prey on them.§ Few, perhaps, are in the habit of duly appreciating the extent to which insects are active in preserving the balance of species among plants, and thus regulating indirectly the relative numbers of many of the higher orders of terrestrial animals.

---

* Amœn. Acad., vol. vi. p. 17. § 11, 12.

† Kirby and Spence, vol. i. p. 178.

‡ Amœn. Acad., vol. vi. § 14.

§ Kirby and Spence, vol. iv. p. 218.

The peculiarity of their agency consists in their power of suddenly multiplying their numbers to a degree which could only be accomplished in a considerable lapse of time in any of the larger animals, and then as instantaneously relapsing, without the intervention of any violent disturbing cause, into their former insignificance.

If, for the sake of employing, on different but rare occasions, a power of many hundred horses, we were under the necessity of feeding all these animals at great cost in the intervals when their services were not required, we should greatly admire the invention of a machine, such as the steam-engine, which was capable at any moment of exerting the same degree of strength without any consumption of food during periods of inaction. The same kind of admiration is strongly excited when we contemplate the powers of insect life, in the creation of which nature has been so prodigal. A scanty number of minute individuals, to be detected only by careful research, are ready in a few days, weeks, or months, to give birth to myriads, which may repress any degree of monopoly in another species, or remove nuisances, such as dead carcasses, which might taint the air. But no sooner has the destroying commission been executed than the gigantic power becomes dormant — each of the mighty host soon reaches the term of its transient existence, and the season arrives when the whole species passes naturally into the egg, and thence into the larva and pupa state. In this defenceless condition it may be destroyed either by the elements, or by the augmentation of some of its numerous foes which may prey upon it in these stages of its transformation; or it often happens that in the following year the season proves unfavourable to the hatching of the eggs or the development of the pupæ.

Thus the swarming myriads depart which may have covered the vegetation like the aphides, or darkened the air like locusts. In almost every season there are some species which in this manner put forth their strength, and then, like Milton's spirits, which thronged the spacious hall, "reduce to smallest forms their shapes immense"—

> ———— So thick the aëry crowd
> Swarm'd and were straiten'd; till, the signal given,
> Behold a wonder! they but now who seem'd
> In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
> Now less than smallest dwarfs.

A few examples will illustrate the mode in which this force operates. It is well known that, among the countless species of the insect creation, some feed on animal, others on vegetable matter; and, upon considering a catalogue of eight thousand British insects and arachnidæ, Mr. Kirby found that these two divisions were nearly a counterpoise to each other, the carnivorous being somewhat preponderant. There are also distinct species, some appointed to consume living, others dead or putrid animal and vegetable substances. One female, of *Musca carnaria*, will give birth to twenty thousand young; and the larvæ of many flesh-flies devour so much food in twenty-four hours, and grow so quickly, as to increase their weight two hundred-fold! In five days after being hatched they arrive at their full growth and size, so that there was ground, says Kirby, for the assertion of Linnæus, that three flies of M. vomitoria could devour a dead horse as quickly as a lion*; and another Swedish naturalist remarks, that so great are the powers of propagation of a single species, even of the smallest insects, that each can commit, when required, more ravages than the elephant.†

Next to locusts, the aphides, perhaps, exert the greatest power over the vegetable world, and, like them, are sometimes so numerous as to darken the air. The multiplication of these little creatures is without parallel, and almost every plant has its peculiar species. Reaumur has proved that in five generations one aphis may be the progenitor of 5,904,900,000 descendants; and it is supposed that in one year there may be twenty generations.‡ Mr. Curtis observes that, as among caterpillars we find some that are constantly and unalterably attached to one or more particular species of plants, and others that feed indiscriminately on most sorts of herbage, so it is precisely with the aphides: some are particular, others more general, feeders; and as they resemble other insects in this respect, so they do also in being more abundant in some years than in others.§ In 1793 they were the chief, and in 1798 the sole, cause of the failure of the hops. In 1794, a season almost unparalleled for drought, the hop was perfectly free from them; while peas and beans, especially the former, suffered very much from their depredations.

The ravages of the caterpillars of some of our smaller moths afford a good illustration of the temporary increase of a species. The oak-trees of a considerable wood have been stripped of their leaves as bare as in winter, by the caterpillars of a small green moth (*Tortrix viridana*), which has been observed the year following not to abound.* The Gamma moth (*Plusia gamma*), although one of our common species, is not dreaded by us for its devastations; but legions of their caterpillars have at times created alarm in France, as in 1735. Reaumur observes that the female moth lays about four hundred eggs; so that if twenty caterpillars were distributed in a garden, and all lived through the winter and became moths in the succeeding May, the eggs laid by these, if all fertile, would produce more than three million moths.† A modern writer, therefore, justly observes that, did not Providence put causes in operation to keep them in due bounds, the caterpillars of this moth alone, leaving out of consideration the two thousand other British species, would soon destroy more than half of our vegetation.‡

---

* Kirby and Spence, vol. i. p. 250.

† Wilcke, Amœn. Acad., chap. ii.

‡ Kirby and Spence, vol. i. p. 174.

§ Trans. Linn. Soc., vol. vi.

In the latter part of the last century an ant, most destructive to the sugar-cane (*Formica saccharivora*), appeared in such infinite hosts in the island of Granada, as to put a stop to the cultivation of that vegetable. Their numbers were incredible. The plantations and roads were filled with them; many domestic quadrupeds, together with rats, mice, and reptiles, and even birds, perished in consequence of this plague. It was not till 1780 that they were at length annihilated by torrents of rain, which accompanied a dreadful hurricane.‡

---

* Lib. Ent. Know., Insect Trans., p. 203. See Haworth, Lep.

† Reaumur, ii. 237.

‡ Lib. Ent. Know., Insect Trans., p. 212.

*Devastations caused by locusts.* — We may conclude by mentioning some instances of the devastations of locusts in various countries. Among other parts of Africa, Cyrenaica has been at different periods infested by myriads of these creatures, which have consumed nearly every green thing. The effect of the havoc committed by them may be estimated by the famine they occasioned. St. Augustin mentions a plague of this kind in Africa which destroyed no less than 800,000 men in the kingdom of Masinissa alone, and many more upon the territories bordering upon the sea. It is also related, that in the year 591 an infinite army of locusts migrated from Africa into Italy; and, after grievously ravaging the country, were cast into the sea, when there arose a pestilence from their stench which carried off nearly a million of men and beasts.

In the Venetian territory, also, in 1478, more than thirty thousand persons are said to have perished in a famine occasioned by this scourge; and other instances are recorded of their devastations in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, &c. In different parts of Russia also, Hungary, and Poland,— in Arabia and India, and other countries, — their visitations have been periodically experienced. Although they have a preference for certain plants, yet, when these are consumed, they will attack almost all the remainder. In the accounts of the invasions of locusts, the statements which appear most marvellous relate to the prodigious mass of matter which encumbers the sea wherever they are blown into it, and the pestilence arising from its putrefaction. Their dead bodies are said to have been, in some places, heaped one upon another, to the depth of four feet, in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania; and when, in southern Africa, they were driven into the sea by a north-west wind, they formed, says Barrow, along the shore, for fifty miles, a bank three or four feet high.* But when we consider that forests are stripped of their foliage, and the earth of its green garment, for thousands of square miles, it may well be supposed that the volume of animal matter produced may equal that of great herds of quadrupeds and flights of large birds suddenly precipitated into the sea.

---

* Kirby and Spence, vol. i. p. 183. Castle, Phil. Trans., xxx. 346.

The occurrence of such events at certain intervals, in hot countries, like the severe winters and damp summers returning after a series of years in the temperate zone, affect the proportional numbers of almost all classes of animals and plants, and are probably fatal to the existence of many which would otherwise thrive there; while, on the contrary, they must be favourable to certain species which, if deprived of such aid, might not maintain their ground.

Although it may usually be remarked that the extraordinary increase of some one species is immediately followed and checked by the multiplication of another, yet this does not always happen; partly because many species feed in common on the same kinds of food, and partly because many kinds of food are often consumed indifferently by one and the same species. In the former case, where a variety of different animals have precisely the same taste, as, for example, when many insectivorous birds and reptiles devour alike some particular fly or beetle, the unusual numbers of these insects may cause only a slight and almost imperceptible augmentation of each of these species of bird and reptile. In the other instance, where one animal preys on others of almost every class, as, for example, where our English buzzards devour not only small quadrupeds, as rabbits and field-mice, but also birds, frogs, lizards, and insects, the profusion of any one of these last may cause all such general feeders to subsist more exclusively upon the species thus in excess, by which means the balance may be restored.

---

* Travels in Africa, p. 257. Kirby and Spence, vol. i. p. 215.

*Agency of omnivorous animals.*—The number of species which are nearly omnivorous is considerable; and although every animal has, perhaps, a predilection for some one description of food rather than another, yet some are not even confined to one of the great kingdoms of the organic world. Thus, when the racoon of the West Indies can procure neither fowls, fish, snails, nor insects, it will attack the sugar-canes, and devour various kinds of grain. The civets, when animal food is scarce, maintain themselves on fruits and roots.

Numerous birds, which feed indiscriminately on insects and plants, are perhaps more instrumental than any other of the terrestrial tribes in preserving a constant equilibrium between the relative numbers of different classes of animals and vegetables. If the insects become very numerous, and devour the plants, these birds will immediately derive a larger portion of their subsistence from insects, just as the Arabians, Syrians, and Hottentots feed on locusts, when the locusts devour their crops.

*Reciprocal influence of aquatic and terrestrial species.*—The intimate relation of the inhabitants of the water to those of the land, and the influence exerted by each on the relative number of species, must not be overlooked amongst the complicated causes which determine the existence of animals and plants in certain regions. A large portion of the amphibious quadrupeds and reptiles prey partly on aquatic plants and animals, and in part on terrestrial; and a deficiency of one kind of prey causes them to have immediate recourse to the other. The voracity of certain insects, as the dragon-fly, for example, is confined to the water during one stage of their transformations, and in their perfect state to the air. Innumerable water-birds, both of rivers and seas, derive in like manner their food indifferently from either element; so that the abundance or scarcity of prey in one induces them either to forsake or more constantly to haunt the other. Thus an intimate connexion between the state of the animate creation in a lake or river, and in the adjoining dry land, is maintained; or between a continent, with its lakes and rivers, and the ocean. It is well known that many birds migrate, during stormy seasons, from the sea-shore into the interior, in search of food; while others, on the contrary, urged by like wants, forsake their inland haunts, and live on substances rejected by the tide.

The migration of fish into rivers during the spawning season supplies another link of the same kind. Suppose the salmon to be reduced in numbers by some marine foes, as by seals and grampuses, the consequence must often be, that in the course of a few years the otters at the distance of several hundred miles inland will be lessened in number from the scarcity of fish. On the other hand, if there be a dearth of food for the young fry of the salmon in rivers and estuaries, so that few return to the sea, the sand-eels and other marine species, which are usually kept down by the salmon, will swarm in greater profusion.

It is unnecessary to accumulate a greater number of illustrations in order to prove that the stations of different plants and animals depend on a great complication of circumstances,—on an immense variety of relations in the state of the animate and inanimate worlds. Every plant requires a certain climate, soil, and other conditions, and often the aid of many animals, in order to maintain its ground. Many animals feed on certain plants, being often restricted to a small number, and sometimes to one only; other members of the animal kingdom feed on plant-eating species, and thus become dependent on the conditions of the *stations* not only of their prey, but of the plants consumed by them.

Having duly reflected on the nature and extent of these mutual relations in the different parts of the organic and inorganic worlds, we may next proceed to examine the results which may be anticipated from the fluctuations now continually in progress in the state of the earth's surface, and in the geographical distribution of its living productions.

# CHAPTER IX.

## THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH CONSTITUTE THE STATIONS OF ANIMALS ARE CHANGEABLE.

**Extension of the range of one species alters the condition of many others — The first appearance of a new species causes the chief disturbance — Changes known to have resulted from the advance of human population (p. 127.) — Whether man increases the productive powers of the earth — Indigenous quadrupeds and birds extirpated in Great Britain — Extinction of the Dodo (p. 133.) — Rapid propagation of domestic quadrupeds in America —Power of exterminating species no prerogative of man (p. 139.) —Concluding remarks.**

We have seen that the stations of animals and plants depend not merely on the influence of external agents in the inanimate world, and the relations of that influence to the structure and habits of each species, but also on the state of the contemporary living beings which inhabit the same part of the globe. In other words, the possibility of the existence of a certain species in a given place, or of its thriving more or less therein, is determined not merely by temperature, humidity, soil, elevation, and other circumstances of the like kind; but also by the existence or non-existence, the abundance or scarcity, of a particular assemblage of other plants and animals in the same region.

If it be shown that both these classes of circumstances, whether relating to the animate or inanimate creation, are perpetually changing, it will follow that species are subject to incessant vicissitudes; and if the result of these mutations, in the course of ages, be so great as materially to affect the general condition of *stations*, it will follow that the successive destruction of species must now be part of the regular and constant order of nature.

*Extension of the range of one species alters the condition of others.*—It will be desirable, first, to consider the effects which every extension of the numbers or geographical range of one species must produce on the condition of others inhabiting the same regions. When the necessary consequences of such extensions have been fully explained, the reader will be prepared to appreciate the important influence which slight modifications in the physical geography of the globe may exert on the condition of organic beings.

In the first place, it is clear that when any region is stocked with as great a variety of animals and plants as the productive powers of that region will enable it to support, the addition of any new species, or the *permanent* numerical increase of one previously established, must always be attended either by the local extermination or the numerical decrease of some other species.

There may undoubtedly be considerable fluctuations from year to year, and the equilibrium may be again restored without any permanent alteration; for, in particular seasons, a greater supply of heat, humidity, or other causes, may augment the total quantity of vegetable produce, in which case all the animals subsisting on vegetable food, and others which prey on them, may multiply without any one species giving way: but whilst the aggregate quantity of vegetable produce remains unaltered, the progressive increase of one animal or plant implies the decline of another.

All agriculturists and gardeners are familiar with the fact that, when weeds intrude themselves into the space appropriated to cultivated species, the latter are starved in their growth or stifled. If we abandon for a short time a field or garden, a host of indigenous plants,

> The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory,

pour in and obtain the mastery, extirpating the exotics, or putting an end to the monopoly of some native plants.

If we inclose a park, and stock it with as many deer as the herbage will support, we cannot add sheep without lessening the number of the deer; nor can other herbivorous species be subsequently introduced, unless the individuals of each species in the park become fewer in proportion.

So, if there be an island where leopards are the only beasts of prey, and the lion, tiger, and hyæna afterwards enter, the leopards, if they stand their ground, will be reduced in number. If the locusts then arrive and swarm greatly, this may deprive a large number of plant-eating animals of their food, and thereby cause a famine, not only among them, but among the beasts of prey; certain species, perhaps, which had the weakest footing in the island may thus be annihilated.

We have seen how many distinct geographical provinces there are of aquatic and terrestrial species, and how great are the powers of migration conferred on different classes, whereby the inhabitants of one region may be enabled from time to time to invade another, and do actually so migrate and diffuse themselves over new countries. Now, although our knowledge of the history of the animate creation dates from so recent a period, that we can scarcely trace the advance or decline of any animal or plant, except in those cases where the influence of man has intervened; yet we can easily conceive what must happen when some new colony of wild animals or plants enters a region for the first time, and succeeds in establishing itself.

*Supposed effects of the first entrance of the polar bear into Iceland.*—Let us consider how great are the devastations committed at certain periods by the Greenland bears, when they are drifted to the shores of Iceland in considerable numbers on the ice. These periodical invasions are formidable even to man; so that when the bears arrive, the inhabitants collect together, and go in pursuit of them with fire-arms—each native who slays one being rewarded by the king of Denmark. The Danes of old, when they landed in their marauding expeditions upon our coast, hardly excited more alarm; nor did our islanders muster more promptly for the defence of their lives and property against a common enemy, than the modern Icelanders against these formidable brutes. It often happens, says Henderson, that the natives are pursued by the bear when he has been long at sea, and when his natural ferocity has been heightened by the keenness of hunger; if unarmed, it is frequently by stratagem only that they make their escape.*

Let us cast our thoughts back to the period when the first polar bears reached Iceland, before it was colonized by the Norwegians in 874; we may imagine the breaking up of an immense barrier of ice, like that which, in 1816 and the following year, disappeared from the east coast of Greenland, which it had surrounded for four centuries. By the aid of such means of transportation a great number of these quadrupeds might effect a landing at the same time, and the havoc which they would make among the species previously settled in the island would be terrific. The deer, foxes, seals, and even birds, on which these animals sometimes prey, would be soon thinned down.

---

* Journal of a Residence in Iceland, p. 276.

But this would be a part only, and probably an insignificant portion, of the aggregate amount of change brought about by the new invader. The plants on which the deer fed being less consumed in consequence of the lessened numbers of that herbivorous species, would soon supply more food to several insects, and probably to some terrestrial testacea, so that the latter would gain ground. The increase of these would furnish other insects and birds with food, so that the numbers of these last would be augmented. The diminution of the seals would afford a respite to some fish which they had persecuted; and these fish, in their turn, would then multiply and press upon their peculiar prey. Many water-fowls, the eggs and young of which are devoured by foxes, would increase when the foxes were thinned down by the bears; and the fish on which the water-fowls subsisted would then, in their turn, be less numerous. Thus the numerical proportions of a great number of the inhabitants, both of the land and sea, might be permanently altered by the settling of one new species in the region; and the changes caused indirectly would ramify through all classes of the living creation, and be almost endless.

An actual illustration of what we have here only proposed hypothetically, is in some degree afforded by the selection of small islands by the eider duck for its residence during the season of incubation, its nests being seldom if ever found on the shores of the main land, or even of a large island. The Icelanders are so well aware of this, that they have expended a great deal of labour in forming artificial islands, by separating from the main land certain promontories, joined to it by narrow isthmuses. This insular position is necessary to guard against the destruction of the eggs and young birds, by foxes, dogs, and other animals. One year, says Hooker, it happened that, in the small island of Vidoe, adjoining the coast of Iceland, a fox got over *upon the ice*, and caused great alarm, as an immense number of ducks were then sitting on their eggs or young ones. It was long before he was taken, which was at last, however, effected by bringing another fox to the island, and fastening it by a string near the haunt of the former, by which he was allured within shot of the hunter.*

*The first appearance of a new species causes the chief disturbance.* — It is usually the first appearance of an animal or plant, in a region to which it was previously a stranger, that gives rise to the chief alteration; since, after a time, an equilibrium is again established. But it must require ages before such a new adjustment of the relative forces of so many conflicting agents can be definitively settled. The causes in simultaneous action are so numerous, that they admit of an almost infinite number of combinations; and it is necessary that all these should have occurred once before the total amount of change, capable of flowing from any new disturbing force, can be estimated.

Thus, for example, suppose that once in two centuries a frost of unusual intensity, or a volcanic eruption of great violence accompanied by floods from the melting of glaciers, should occur in Iceland; or an epidemic disease, fatal to the larger number of individuals of some one species, and not affecting others, — these, and a variety of other contingencies, all of which may occur at once, or at periods separated by different intervals of time, ought to happen before it would be possible for us to declare what ultimate alteration the presence of any new comer, such as the bear before mentioned, might occasion in the animal population of the isle.

---

* Tour in Iceland, vol. i. p. 64., second edition.

Every new condition in the state of the organic or inorganic creation, a new animal or plant, an additional snow-clad mountain, any permanent change, however slight in comparison to the whole, gives rise to a new order of things, and may make a material change in regard to some one or more species. Yet a swarm of locusts, or a frost of extreme intensity, or an epidemic disease, may pass away without any great apparent derangement; no species may be lost, and all may soon recover their former relative numbers, because the same scourges may have visited the region again and again, at preceding periods. Every plant that was incapable of resisting such a degree of cold, every animal which was exposed to be entirely cut off by an epidemic or by famine, caused by the consumption of vegetation by the locusts, may have perished already, so that the subsequent recurrence of similar catastrophes is attended only by a temporary change.

### *Changes caused by Man.*

We are best acquainted with the mutations brought about by the progress of human population, and the growth of plants and animals favoured by man. To these, therefore, we should in the first instance turn our attention. If we conclude, from the concurrent testimony of history and of the evidence yielded by geological data, that man is, comparatively speaking, of very modern origin, we must at once perceive how great a revolution in the state of the animate world the increase of the human race, considered merely as consumers of a certain quantity of organic matter, must necessarily cause.

*Whether man increases the productive powers of the earth.* — It may, perhaps, be said, that man has, in some degree, compensated for the appropriation to himself of so much food, by artificially improving the natural productiveness of soils, by irrigation, manure, and a judicious intermixture of mineral ingredients conveyed from different localities. But it admits of reasonable doubt whether, upon the whole, we fertilize or impoverish the lands which we occupy. This assertion may seem startling to many; because they are so much in the habit of regarding the sterility or productiveness of land in relation to the wants of man, and not as regards the organic world generally. It is difficult, at first, to conceive, if a morass is converted into arable land, and made to yield a crop of grain, even of moderate abundance, that we have not improved the capabilities of the habitable surface — that we have not empowered it to support a larger quantity of organic life. In such cases, however, a tract, before of no utility to man, may be reclaimed, and become of high agricultural importance, though it may, nevertheless, yield a scantier vegetation. If a lake be drained, and turned into a meadow, the space will provide sustenance to man, and many terrestrial animals serviceable to him, but not, perhaps, so much food as it previously yielded to the aquatic races.

If the pestiferous Pontine Marshes were drained, and covered with corn, like the plains of the Po, they might, perhaps, feed a smaller number of animals than they do now; for these morasses are filled with herds of buffaloes and swine, and they swarm with birds, reptiles, and insects.

The felling of dense and lofty forests, which covered, even within the records of history, a considerable space on the globe, now tenanted by civilized man, must generally have lessened the amount of vegetable food throughout the space where these woods grew. We must also take into our account the area covered by towns, and a still larger surface occupied by roads.

If we force the soil to bear extraordinary crops one year, we are, perhaps, compelled to let it lie fallow the next. But nothing so much counterbalances the fertilizing effects of human art as the extensive cultivation of foreign herbs and shrubs, which, although they are often more nutritious to man, seldom thrive with the same rank luxuriance as the native plants of a district. Man is, in truth, continually striving to diminish the natural diversity of the *stations* of animals and plants in every country, and to reduce them all to a small number fitted for species of economical use. He may succeed perfectly in attaining his object, even though the vegetation be comparatively meagre, and the total amount of animal life be greatly lessened.

Spix and Martius have given a lively description of the incredible number of insects which lay waste the crops in Brazil, besides swarms of monkeys, flocks of parrots, and other birds, as well as the paca, agouti, and wild swine. They describe the torment which the planter and the naturalist suffer from the musquitoes, and the devastation of the ants and blattæ; they speak of the dangers to which they were exposed from the jaguar, the poisonous serpents, lizards, scorpions, centipedes, and spiders. But with the increasing population and cultivation of the country, observe these naturalists, these evils will gradually diminish; when the inhabitants have cut down the woods, drained the marshes, made roads in all directions, and founded villages and towns, man will, by degrees, triumph over the rank vegetation and the noxious animals, and all the elements will second and amply recompense his activity.*

The number of human beings now peopling the earth is supposed to amount to eight hundred millions, so that we may easily understand how great a number of beasts of prey, birds, and animals of every class, this prodigious population must have displaced, independently of the still more important consequences which have followed from the derangement brought about by man in the relative numerical strength of particular species.

*Indigenous quadrupeds and birds extirpated in Great Britain.*—Let us make some inquiries into the extent of the influence which the progress of society has exerted during the last seven or eight centuries, in altering the distribution of indigenous British animals. Dr. Fleming has prosecuted this inquiry with his usual zeal and ability; and in a memoir on the subject has enumerated the best authenticated examples of the decrease or extirpation of certain species during a period when our population has made the most rapid advances. I shall offer a brief outline of his results.*

---

* Travels in Brazil, vol. i. p. 260.

The stag, as well as the fallow deer and the roe, were formerly so abundant in our island, that, according to Lesley, from five hundred to a thousand were sometimes slain at a hunting-match; but the native races would already have been extinguished, had they not been carefully preserved in certain forests. The otter, the marten, and the pole-cat, were also in sufficient numbers to be pursued for the sake of their fur; but they have now been reduced within very narrow bounds. The wild cat and fox have also been sacrificed throughout the greater part of the country, for the security of the poultry-yard or the fold. Badgers have been expelled from nearly every district which at former periods they inhabited.

Besides these, which have been driven out from some haunts, and every where reduced in number, there are some which have been wholly extirpated; such as the ancient breed of indigenous horses, and the wild boar; of the wild oxen, a few remains are still preserved in the parks of some of our nobility. The beaver, which was eagerly sought after for its fur, had become scarce at the close of the ninth century; and, by the twelfth century, was only to be met with, according to Giraldus de Barri, in one river in Wales, and another in Scotland. The wolf, once so much dreaded by our ancestors, is said to have maintained its ground in Ireland so late as the beginning of the eighteenth century (1710), though it had been extirpated in Scotland thirty years before, and in England at a much earlier period. The bear, which, in Wales, was regarded as a beast of the chase equal to the hare or the boar *, only perished, as a native of Scotland, in the year 1057.†

---

* Ed. Phil. Journ., No. xxii. p. 287. Oct. 1824.

Many native birds of prey have also been the subjects of unremitting persecution. The eagles, larger hawks, and ravens, have disappeared from the more cultivated districts. The haunts of the mallard, the snipe, the redshank, and the bittern, have been drained equally with the summer dwellings of the lapwing and the curlew. But these species still linger in some portion of the British isles; whereas the large capercailzies, or wood grouse, formerly natives of the pine-forests of Ireland and Scotland, have been destroyed within the last fifty years. The egret and the crane, which appear to have been formerly very common in Scotland, are now only occasional visitants.‡

The bustard (*Otis tarda*), observes Graves, in his British Ornithology §, "was formerly seen in the downs and heaths of various parts of our island, in flocks of forty or fifty birds; whereas it is now a circumstance of rare occurrence to meet with a single individual." Bewick also remarks, "that they were formerly more common in this island than at present; they are now found only in the open counties of the south and east — in the plains of Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and some parts of Yorkshire." In the few years that have elapsed since Bewick wrote, this bird has entirely disappeared from Wiltshire and Dorsetshire.‖

These changes, it may be observed, are derived from very imperfect memorials, and relate only to the larger and more conspicuous animals inhabiting a small spot on the globe; but they cannot fail to exalt our conception of the enormous revolutions which, in the course of several thousand years, the whole human species must have effected.

---

* Ray, Syn. Quad., p. 214.

† Fleming, Ed. Phil. Journ., No. xxii. p. 295.

‡ Fleming, ibid., p. 292.

§ Vol. iii., London, 1821.

‖ Land Birds, vol. i. p. 316. ed. 1821.

*Extinction of the Dodo.*—The kangaroo and the emu are retreating rapidly before the progress of colonization in Australia; and it scarcely admits of doubt, that the general cultivation of that country must lead to the extirpation of both. The most striking example of the loss, even within the last two centuries, of a remarkable species, is that of the dodo — a bird first seen by the Dutch, when they landed on the Isle of France, at that time uninhabited, immediately after the discovery of the passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope. It was of a large size, and singular form; its wings short, like those of an ostrich, and wholly incapable of sustaining its heavy body, even for a short flight. In its general appearance it differed from the ostrich, cassowary, or any known bird.

Many naturalists gave figures of the dodo after the commencement of the seventeenth century; and there is a painting of it in the British Museum, which is said to have been taken from a living individual. Beneath the painting is a leg, in a fine state of preservation, which ornithologists are agreed cannot belong to any other known bird. In the museum at Oxford, also, there is a foot and a head, in an imperfect state; but M. Cuvier doubts the identity of this species with that of which the painting is preserved in London.

In spite of the most active search, during the last century, no information respecting the dodo was obtained, and some authors have gone so far as to pretend that it never existed; but, amongst a great mass of satisfactory evidence in favour of the recent existence of this species, we may mention that an assemblage of fossil bones were recently discovered, under a bed of lava, in the Isle of France, and sent to the Paris Museum by M. Desjardins. They almost all belonged to a large living species of land-tortoise, called *Testudo Indica;* but amongst them were the head, sternum, and humerus of the dodo. M. Cuvier showed me these valuable remains in Paris, and assured me that they left no doubt in his mind that the huge bird was one of the gallinaceous tribe.*

*Rapid propagation of domestic quadrupeds over the American continent.* — Next to the direct agency of man, his indirect influence in multiplying the numbers of large herbivorous quadrupeds of domesticated races may be regarded as one of the most obvious causes of the extermination of species. On this, and on several other grounds, the introduction of the horse, ox, and other mammalia, into America, and their rapid propagation over that continent within the last three centuries, is a fact of great importance in natural history. The extraordinary herds of wild cattle and horses which overran the plains of South America sprung from a very few pairs first carried over by the Spaniards; and they prove that the wide geographical range of large species in great continents does not necessarily imply that they have existed there from remote periods.

Humboldt observes, in his Travels, on the authority of Azzara, that it is believed there exist, in the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, twelve million cows and three million horses, without comprising, in this enumeration, the cattle that have no acknowledged proprietor. In the Llanos of Caraccas, the rich hateros, or proprietors of pastoral farms, are entirely ignorant of the number of cattle they possess. The young are branded with a mark peculiar to each herd, and some of the most wealthy owners mark as many as fourteen thousand a year.* In the northern plains, from the Orinoco to the lake of Maracaybo, M. Depons reckoned that 1,200,000 oxen, 180,000 horses, and 90,000 mules, wandered at large.† In some parts of the valley of the Mississippi, especially in the country of the Osage Indians, wild horses are immensely numerous.

---

* Sur quelques Ossemens, &c. — Ann. des Sci., tome xxi. p. 103. Sept. 1830.

The establishment of black cattle in America dates from Columbus's second voyage to St. Domingo. They there multiplied rapidly; and that island presently became a kind of nursery from which these animals were successively transported to various parts of the continental coast, and from thence into the interior. Notwithstanding these numerous exportations, in twenty-seven years after the discovery of the island, herds of four thousand head, as we learn from Oviedo, were not uncommon, and there were even some that amounted to eight thousand. In 1587, the number of hides exported from St. Domingo alone, according to Acosta's report, was 35,444; and in the same year there were exported 64,350 from the ports of New Spain. This was in the sixty-fifth year after the taking of Mexico, previous to which event the Spaniards, who came into that country, had not been able to engage in any thing else than war.*

---

* Pers. Nar., vol. iv.

† Quarterly Review, vol. xxi. p. 335.

Every one is aware that these animals are now established throughout the American continent, from Canada to Paraguay.

The ass has thriven very generally in the New World; and we learn from Ulloa, that in Quito they ran wild, and multiplied in amazing numbers, so as to become a nuisance. They grazed together in herds, and when attacked defended themselves with their mouths. If a horse happened to stray into the places where they fed, they all fell upon him, and did not cease biting and kicking till they left him dead.†

The first hogs were carried to America by Columbus, and established in the island of St. Domingo the year following its discovery, in November, 1493. In succeeding years they were introduced into other places where the Spaniards settled; and, in the space of half a century, they were found established in the New World, from the latitude of 25° north, to the 40th degree of south latitude. Sheep, also, and goats have multiplied enormously in the New World, as have also the cat and the rat; which last, as before stated, has been imported unintentionally in ships. The dogs introduced by man, which have at different periods become wild in America, hunted in packs, like the wolf and the jackal, destroying not only hogs, but the calves and foals of the wild cattle and horses.

Ulloa in his Voyage, and Buffon on the authority of old writers, relate a fact which illustrates very clearly the principle before explained, of the check which the increase of one animal necessarily offers to that of another. The Spaniards had introduced goats into the island of Juan Fernandez, where they became so prolific as to furnish the pirates who infested those seas with provisions. In order to cut off this resource from the buccaneers, a number of dogs were turned loose into the island; and so numerous did they become in their turn, that they destroyed the goats in every accessible part, after which the number of the wild dogs again decreased.*

---

* Quarterly Review, vol. xxi. p. 335.

† Ulloa's Voyage. Wood's Zoog., vol. i. p. 9.

*Increase of rein-deer imported into Iceland.* — As an example of the rapidity with which a large tract may become peopled by the offspring of a single pair of quadrupeds, I may mention, that in the year 1773 thirteen rein-deer were exported from Norway, only three of which reached Iceland. These were turned loose into the mountains of Guldbringè Syssel, where they multiplied so greatly, in the course of forty years, that it was not uncommon to meet with herds, consisting of from forty to one hundred, in various districts.

In Lapland, observes a modern writer, the rein-deer is a loser by his connexion with man, but Iceland will be this creature's paradise. There is, in the interior, a tract which Sir G. Mackenzie computes at not less than forty thousand square miles, without a single human habitation, and almost entirely unknown to the natives themselves. There are no wolves; the Icelanders will keep out the bears; and the rein-deer, being almost unmolested by man, will have no enemy whatever, unless it has brought with it its own tormenting gadfly.*

---

* Buffon, vol. v. p. 100. Ulloa's Voyage, vol. ii. p. 220.

Besides the quadrupeds before enumerated, our domestic fowls have also succeeded in the West Indies and America, where they have the common fowl, the goose, the duck, the peacock, the pigeon, and the guinea-fowl. As these were often taken suddenly from the temperate to very hot regions, they were not reared at first without much difficulty; but after a few generations they became familiarized to the climate, which, in many cases, approached much nearer than that of Europe to the temperature of their original native countries.

The fact of so many millions of wild and tame individuals of our domestic species, almost all of them the largest quadrupeds and birds, having been propagated throughout the new continent within the short period that has elapsed since the discovery of America, while no appreciable improvement can have been made in the productive powers of that vast continent, affords abundant evidence of the extraordinary changes which accompany the diffusion and progressive advancement of the human race over the globe. That it should have remained for us to witness such mighty revolutions is a proof, even if there was no other evidence, that the entrance of man into the planet is, comparatively speaking, of extremely modern date, and that the effects of his agency are only beginning to be felt.

*Population which the globe is capable of supporting.*— A modern writer has estimated, that there are in America upwards of four million square miles of useful soil, each capable of supporting 200 persons; and nearly six million, each mile capable of supporting 490 persons.* If this conjecture be true, it will follow, as that author observes, that if the natural resources of America were fully developed, it would afford sustenance to five times as great a number of inhabitants as the entire mass of human beings existing at present upon the globe. The new continent, he thinks, though less than half the size of the old, contains an equal quantity of useful soil, and much more than an equal amount of productive power. Be this as it may, we may safely conclude that the amount of human population now existing constitutes but a small proportion of that which the globe is capable of supporting, or which it is destined to sustain at no distant period, by the rapid progress of society, especially in America, Australia, and certain parts of the old continent.

---

* Travels in Iceland in 1810, p. 342.

*Power of exterminating species no prerogative of man.* — But if we reflect that many millions of square miles of the most fertile land, occupied originally by a boundless variety of animal and vegetable forms, have been already brought under the dominion of man, and compelled, in a great measure, to yield nourishment to him, and to a limited number of plants and animals which he has caused to increase, we must at once be convinced, that the annihilation of a multitude of species has already been effected, and will continue to go on hereafter, in certain regions, in a still more rapid ratio, as the colonies of highly civilized nations spread themselves over unoccupied lands.

Yet, if we wield the sword of extermination as we advance, we have no reason to repine at the havoc committed, nor to fancy, with the Scottish poet, that "we violate the social union of nature;" or complain, with the melancholy Jaques, that we

---

* Maclaren, art. America, Encyc. Britannica.

> Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,
> To fright the animals and to kill them up
> In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

We have only to reflect, that in thus obtaining possession of the earth by conquest, and defending our acquisitions by force, we exercise no exclusive prerogative. Every species which has spread itself from a small point over a wide area must, in like manner, have marked its progress by the diminution or the entire extirpation of some other, and must maintain its ground by a successful struggle against the encroachments of other plants and animals. That minute parasitic plant, called "the rust" in wheat, has, like the Hessian fly, the locust, and the aphis, caused famines ere now amongst the "lords of the creation." The most insignificant and diminutive species, whether in the animal or vegetable kingdom, have each slaughtered their thousands, as they disseminated themselves over the globe, as well as the lion, when first it spread itself over the tropical regions of Africa.

*Concluding remarks.*—Although we have as yet considered one class only of the causes (the organic) by which species may become exterminated, yet it cannot but appear evident that the continued action of these alone, throughout myriads of future ages, must work an entire change in the state of the organic creation, not merely on the continents and islands, where the power of man is chiefly exerted, but in the great ocean, where his controul is almost unknown. The mind is prepared by the contemplation of such future revolutions to look for the signs of others, of an analogous nature, in the monuments of the past. Instead of being astonished at the proofs there manifested of endless mutations in the animate world, they will appear to one who has thought profoundly on the fluctuations now in progress, to afford evidence in favour of the uniformity of the system, unless, indeed, we are precluded from speaking of *uniformity* when we characterize a principle of endless variation.

## CHAPTER X.

### INFLUENCE OF INORGANIC CAUSES IN CHANGING THE HABITATIONS OF SPECIES.

**Powers of diffusion indispensable, that each species may maintain its ground — How changes in the physical geography affect the distribution of species — Rate of the change of species due to this cause cannot be uniform (p. 145.) — Every change in the physical geography of large regions tends to the extinction of species (p. 152.) — Effects of a general alteration of climate on the migration of species — Gradual refrigeration would cause species in the northern and southern hemispheres to become distinct — elevation of temperature the reverse — Effects on the condition of species which must result from inorganic changes inconsistent with the theory of transmutation (p. 161).**

*Powers of diffusion indispensable, that each species may maintain its ground.* — HAVING shown in the last chapter how considerably the numerical increase or the extension of the geographical range of any one species must derange the numbers and distribution of others, let us now direct our attention to the influence which the inorganic causes described in the second book are continually exerting on the habitations of species.

So great is the instability of the earth's surface, that if nature were not continually engaged in the task of sowing seeds and colonizing animals, the depopulation of a certain portion of the habitable sea and land would in a few years be considerable. Whenever a river transports sediment into a lake or sea, so as materially to diminish its depth, the aquatic animals and plants which delight in deep water are expelled: the tract, however, is not allowed to remain useless; but is soon peopled by species which require more light and heat, and thrive where the water is shallow. Every addition made to the land by the encroachment of the delta of a river banishes many subaqueous species from their native abodes; but the new-formed plain is not permitted to lie unoccupied, being instantly covered with terrestrial vegetation. The ocean devours continuous lines of sea-coast, and precipitates forests or rich pasture land into the waves: but this space is not lost to the animate creation; for shells and sea-weed soon adhere to the new-made cliffs, and numerous fish people the channel which the current has scooped out for itself. No sooner has a volcanic island been thrown up than some lichens begin to grow upon it, and it is sometimes clothed with verdure, while smoke and ashes are still occasionally thrown from the crater. The cocoa, pandanus, and mangrove take root upon the coral reef before it has fairly risen above the waves. The burning stream of lava that descends from Etna rolls through the stately forest, and converts to ashes every tree and herb which stands in its way; but the black strip of land thus desolated is covered again, in the course of time, with oaks, pines, and chestnuts, as luxuriant as those which the fiery torrent swept away.

Every flood and landslip, every wave which a hurricane or earthquake throws upon the shore, every shower of volcanic dust and ashes which buries a country far and wide to the depth of many feet, every advance of the sand-flood, every conversion of salt-water into fresh when rivers alter their main channel of discharge, every permanent variation in the rise or fall of tides in an estuary — these and countless other causes displace, in the course of a few centuries, certain plants and animals from stations which they previously occupied. If, therefore, the Author of nature had not been prodigal of those numerous contrivances, before alluded to, for spreading all classes of organic beings over the earth — if he had not ordained that the fluctuations of the animate and inanimate creation should be in perfect harmony with each other, it is evident that considerable spaces, now the most habitable on the globe, would soon be as devoid of life as are the Alpine snows, or the dark abysses of the ocean, or the moving sands of the Sahara.

The powers then of migration and diffusion conferred on animals and plants are indispensable to enable them to maintain their ground, and would be necessary even though it were never intended that a species should gradually extend its geographical range. But a facility of shifting their quarters being once given, it cannot fail to happen that the inhabitants of one province should occasionally penetrate into some other, since the strongest of those barriers which I before described as separating distinct regions are all liable to be thrown down, one after the other, during the vicissitudes of the earth's surface.

*How changes in physical geography affect the distribution of species.* — The numbers and distribution of particular species are affected in two ways, by changes in the physical geography of the earth:—First, these changes promote or retard the migrations of species; secondly, they alter the physical conditions of the localities which species inhabit. If the ocean should gradually wear its way through an isthmus, like that of Suez, it would open a passage for the intermixture of the aquatic tribes of two seas previously disjoined, and would, at the same time, close a free communication which the terrestrial plants and animals of two continents had before enjoyed. These would be, perhaps, the most important consequences in regard to the distribution of species, which would result from the breach made by the sea in such a spot; but there would be others of a distinct nature, such as the conversion of a certain tract of land which formed the isthmus into sea. This space, previously occupied by terrestrial plants and animals, would be immediately delivered over to the aquatic; a local revolution which might have happened in innumerable other parts of the globe, without being attended by any alteration in the blending together of species of two distinct provinces.

*Rate of change of species cannot be uniform.* — This observation leads me to point out one of the most interesting conclusions to which we are led by the contemplation of the vicissitudes of the inanimate world in relation to those of the animate. It is clear that, if the agency of inorganic causes be uniform, as I have supposed, they must operate very irregularly on the state of organic beings, so that the rate according to which these will change in particular regions will not be equal in equal periods of time.

I am not about to advocate the doctrine of general catastrophes recurring at certain intervals, as in the ancient Oriental cosmogonies, nor do I doubt that, if very considerable periods of equal duration could be compared one with another, the rate of change in the living, as well as in the inorganic world, might be nearly uniform; but if we regard each of the causes separately, which we know to be at present the most instrumental in remodelling the state of the surface, we shall find that we must expect each to be in action for thousands of years, without producing any extensive alterations in the habitable surface, and then to give rise, during a very brief period, to important revolutions.

*Illustration derived from subsidences.* — I shall illustrate this principle by a few of the most remarkable examples which present themselves. In the course of the last century, as we have seen, a considerable number of instances are recorded of the solid surface, whether covered by water or not, having been permanently sunk or upraised by subterranean movements. Most of these convulsions are only accompanied by temporary fluctuations in the state of limited districts, and a continued repetition of these events for thousands of years might not produce any decided change in the state of many of those great zoological or botanical provinces of which I have sketched the boundaries.

When, for example, large parts of the ocean and even of inland seas are a thousand fathoms or upwards in depth, it is a matter of no moment to the animate creation that vast tracts should be heaved up many fathoms at certain intervals, or should subside to the same amount. Neither can any material revolution be produced in South America either in the terrestrial or the marine plants or animals by a series of shocks on the coast of Chili, each of which, like that of Penco, in 1750, should uplift the coast about twenty-five feet. Nor if the ground sinks fifty feet at a time, as in the harbour of Port Royal, in Jamaica, in 1692, will such alterations of level work any general fluctuations in the state of organic beings inhabiting the West India islands, or the Caribbean Sea.

It is only when these subterranean powers, by shifting gradually the points where their principal force is developed, happen to strike upon some particular region where a slight change of level immediately affects the distribution of land and water, or the state of the climate, or the barriers between distinct groups of species over extensive areas, that the rate of fluctuation becomes accelerated, and may, in the course of a few years or centuries, work mightier changes than had been experienced in myriads of antecedent years.

Thus, for example, a repetition of subsidences causing the narrow isthmus of Panamá to sink down a few hundred feet, would, in a few centuries, bring about a great revolution in the state of the animate creation in the western hemisphere. Thousands of aquatic species would pass, for the first time, from the Caribbean Sea into the Pacific; and thousands of others, before peculiar to the Pacific Ocean, would make their way into the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic. A considerable modification would probably be occasioned by the same event in the direction or volume of the Gulf stream, and thereby the temperature of the sea and the contiguous lands might be altered as far as the influence of that current extends. A change of climate might thus be produced in the ocean from Florida to Spitzbergen, and in many countries of North America, Europe, and Greenland. Not merely the heat, but the quantity of rain which falls, would be altered in certain districts, so that many species would be excluded from tracts where they before flourished; others would be reduced in number; and some would thrive more and multiply. The seeds also and the fruits of plants would no longer be drifted in precisely the same directions, nor the eggs of aquatic animals; neither would species be any longer impeded in their migrations towards particular stations before shut out from them by their inability to cross the mighty current.

Let us take another example from a part of the globe which is at present liable to suffer by earthquakes, namely, the low sandy tract which intervenes between the Sea of Azof and the Caspian. If there should occur a sinking down to a trifling amount, and such ravines should be formed as might be produced by a few earthquakes, not more considerable than have fallen within our limited observation during the last 140 years, the waters of the Sea of Azof would pour rapidly into the Caspian, which, according to the levellings of the Russian travellers Engelhardt and Parrot, is about 350 feet below the level of the Black Sea.* The Sea of Azof would immediately borrow from the Black Sea, that sea again from the Mediterranean, and the Mediterranean from the Atlantic, so that an inexhaustible current would pour down into the low tracts of Asia bordering the Caspian, by which all the sandy salt steppes adjacent to that sea would be inundated. An area of at least eighteen thousand square leagues, now below the level of the Mediterranean, would be converted from land into sea.

The diluvial waters would reach the salt lake of Aral, nor stop until their eastern shores were bounded by the high land which in the steppe of the Kirghis connects the Altay with the Himalaya Mountains. Saratof, Orenburg, and the low regions of the Oxus and Jaxartes, would be submerged. A few years, perhaps a few months, might suffice for the accomplishment of this great revolution in the geography of the interior of Asia; and it is impossible for those who believe in the permanence of the energy with which existing causes now act, not to anticipate analogous events again and again in the course of future ages.

---

* Reise in den Kaukasus.

*Illustration derived from the elevation of land.*— Let us next imagine a few cases of the elevation of land of small extent at certain critical points, as, for example, in the shallowest parts of the Straits of Gibraltar, where the soundings from the African to the European side give only 220 fathoms. In proportion as this submarine barrier of rock was upheaved, to effect which would merely require the shocks of partial and confined earthquakes, the volume of water which pours in from the Atlantic into the Mediterranean would be lessened. But the loss of the inland sea by evaporation would remain the same; so that being no longer able to draw on the ocean for a supply sufficient to restore its equilibrium, it must sink, and leave dry a certain portion of land around its borders. The current which now flows constantly out of the Black Sea into the Mediterranean would then rush in more rapidly, and the level of the Mediterranean would be thereby prevented from falling so low; but the level of the Black Sea would, for the same reason, sink; so that when, by a continued series of elevatory movements, the Straits of Gibraltar had become completely closed up, we might expect large and level sandy steppes to surround both the Black Sea and Mediterranean, like those occurring at present on the skirts of the Caspian, and the Lake of Aral. The geographical range of hundreds of aquatic species would be thereby circumscribed, and that of hundreds of terrestrial plants and animals extended.

A line of submarine volcanos crossing the channel of some strait, and gradually choking it up with ashes and lava, might produce a new barrier as effectually as a series of earthquakes; especially if thermal springs, charged with carbonate of lime, silica, and other mineral ingredients, should promote the rapid multiplication of corals and shells, and cement them together with solid matter precipitated during the intervals between eruptions. Suppose in this manner a stoppage to be caused of the Bahama Channel between the bank of that name and the coast of Florida. This insignificant revolution, confined to a mere spot in the bottom of the ocean, would, by diverting the main current of the Gulf stream, give rise more effectually than the opening of the Straits of Panamá, before supposed, to extensive changes in the climate and distribution of animals and plants inhabiting the northern hemisphere.

*Illustration from the formation of new islands.*—A repetition of elevatory movements of earthquakes might continue over an area as extensive as Europe, for thousands of ages, at the bottom of the ocean, in certain regions, and produce no visible effects; whereas, if they should operate in some shallow parts of the Pacific, amid the coral archipelagos, they would soon give birth to a new continent. Hundreds of volcanic islands may be thrown up, and become covered with vegetation, without causing more than local fluctuations in the animate world; but if a chain like the Aleutian archipelago, or the Kurile Isles, run for a distance of many hundred miles, so as to form an almost uninterrupted communication between two continents, or two distant islands, the migrations of plants, birds, insects, and even of some quadrupeds, may cause, in a short time, an extraordinary series of revolutions tending to augment the range of some animals and plants, and to limit that of others. A new archipelago might be formed in the Mediterranean, the Bay of Biscay, and a thousand other places, and might produce less important events than one rock which should rise up between Australia and Java, so placed that winds and currents might cause an interchange of the plants, insects, and birds.

*From the wearing through of an isthmus.*—If we turn from the igneous to the aqueous agents, we find the same tendency to an irregular rate of change, naturally connected with the strictest uniformity in the energy of those causes. When the sea, for example, gradually encroaches upon both sides of a narrow isthmus, as that of Sleswick, separating the North Sea from the Baltic, where, as before stated, the cliffs on both the opposite coasts are wasting away *, no material alteration results for thousands of years, save only that there is a progressive conversion of a small strip of land into water. A few feet only, or a few yards, are annually removed; but when, at last, the partition shall be broken down, and the tides of the ocean shall enter by a direct passage into the inland sea, instead of going by a circuitous route through the Cattegat, a body of salt water will sweep up as far as the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland, the waters of which are now brackish, or almost fresh; and this revolution will be attended by the local annihilation of many species.

Similar consequences must have resulted, on a small scale, when the sea opened its way through the isthmus of Staveren in the thirteenth century, forming a union between an inland lake and the ocean, and opening, in the course of one century, a shallow strait, more than half as wide as the narrowest part of that which divides England from France.

---

* See p. 59.

*Changes in physical geography which must occasion extinction of species.* — It will almost seem superfluous, after I have thus traced the important modifications in the condition of living beings which flow from changes of trifling extent, to argue that entire revolutions might be brought about, if the climate and physical geography of the whole globe were greatly altered. It has been stated, that species are in general local, some being confined to extremely small spots, and depending for their existence on a combination of causes, which, if they are to be met with elsewhere, occur only in some very remote region. Hence it must happen that, when the nature of these localities is changed, the species will perish; for it will rarely happen that the cause which alters the character of the district will afford new facilities to the species to establish itself elsewhere.

*African desert.* — If we attribute the origin of a great part of the desert of Africa to the gradual progress of moving sands, driven eastward by the westerly winds, we may safely infer that a variety of species must have been annihilated by this cause alone. The sand-flood has been inundating, from time immemorial, the rich lands on the west of the Nile; and we have only to multiply this effect a sufficient number of times, in order to understand how, in the lapse of ages, a whole group of terrestrial animals and plants may become extinct.

This desert, without including Bornou and Darfour, extends, according to the calculation of Humboldt, over 194,000 square leagues; an area nearly three times as great as that of France. In a small portion of so vast a space, we may infer from analogy that there were many peculiar species of plants and animals which must have been banished by the sand, and their habitations invaded by the camel, and by birds and insects formed for the arid sands.

There is evidently nothing in the nature of the catastrophe to favour the escape of the former inhabitants to some adjoining province; nothing to weaken, in the bordering lands, that powerful barrier against emigration—pre-occupancy. Nor, even if the exclusion of a certain group of species from a given tract were compensated by an extension of their range over a new country, would that circumstance tend to the conservation of species in general; for the extirpation would merely then be transferred to the region so invaded. If it be imagined, for example, that the aboriginal quadrupeds, birds, and other animals of Africa, emigrated in consequence of the advance of drift-sand, and colonized Arabia, the indigenous Arabian species must have given way before them, and have been reduced in number or destroyed.

Let us next suppose that, in some central and more elevated parts of the great African desert, the upheaving power of subterranean movements should be exerted throughout an immense series of ages, accompanied, at certain intervals, by volcanic eruptions, such as gave rise at once, in 1755, to a mountain 1600 feet high, on the Mexican plateau. When the continued repetition of these events had caused a mountain-chain, it is obvious that a complete transformation in the state of the climate would be brought about throughout a vast area.

We may imagine the summits of the new chain to rise so high as to be covered, like Mount Atlas, for several thousand feet, with snow, during a great part of the year. The melting of these snows, during the greatest heat, would cause the rivers to swell in the season when the greatest drought now prevails; the waters, moreover, derived from this source, would always be of lower temperature than the surrounding atmosphere, and would thus contribute to cool the climate. During the numerous earthquakes and volcanic eruptions supposed to accompany the gradual formation of the chain, there would be many floods caused by the bursting of temporary lakes, and by the melting of snows by lava. These inundations might deposit alluvial matter far and wide over the original sands, as the country assumed various shapes, and was modified again and again by the moving power from below, and the aqueous erosion of the surface above. At length the Sahara might be fertilized, irrigated by rivers and streamlets intersecting it in every direction, and covered by jungle and morasses; so that the animals and plants which now people Northern Africa would disappear, and the region would gradually become fitted for the reception of a population of species perfectly dissimilar in their forms, habits, and organization.

There are always some peculiar and characteristic features in the physical geography of each large division of the globe; and on these peculiarities the state of animal and vegetable life is dependent. If, therefore, we admit incessant fluctuations in the physical geography, we must, at the same time, concede the successive extinction of terrestrial and aquatic species to be part of the economy of our system. When some great class of *stations* is in excess in certain latitudes, as, for example, in wide savannahs, arid sands, lofty mountains, or inland seas, we find a corresponding development of species adapted for such circumstances. In North America, where there is a chain of vast inland lakes of fresh water, we find an extraordinary abundance and variety of aquatic birds, fresh-water fish, testacea, and small amphibious reptiles, fitted for such a climate. The greater part of these would perish if the lakes were destroyed,—an event that might be brought about by some of the least of those important revolutions contemplated in geology. It might happen that no fresh-water lakes of corresponding magnitude might then exist on the globe; or that, if they occurred elsewhere, they might be situated in New Holland, Southern Africa, Eastern Asia, or some region so distant as to be quite inaccessible to the North American species; or they might be situated within the tropics, in a climate uninhabitable by species fitted for a temperate zone; or, finally, we may presume that they would be pre-occupied by *indigenous* tribes.

To pursue this train of reasoning farther is unnecessary; the geologist has only to reflect on what has been said of the habitations and stations of organic beings in general, and to consider them in relation to those effects which were contemplated in the second book, as resulting from the igneous and aqueous causes now in action, and he will immediately perceive that, amidst the vicissitudes of the earth's surface, species cannot be immortal, but must perish, one after the other, like the individuals which compose them. There is no possibility of escaping from this conclusion, without resorting to some hypothesis as violent as that of Lamarck, who imagined, as we have before seen, that species are each of them endowed with indefinite powers of modifying their organization, in conformity to the endless changes of circumstances to which they are exposed.

### *Effects of a general Alteration in Climate on the Distribution of Species.*

Some of the effects which must attend every general alteration of *climate* are sufficiently peculiar to claim a separate consideration before concluding the present chapter.

I have before stated that, during seasons of extraordinary severity, many northern birds, and in some countries many quadrupeds, migrate southwards. If these cold seasons were to become frequent, in consequence of a gradual and general refrigeration of the atmosphere, such migrations would be more and more regular, until, at length, many animals, now confined to the arctic regions, would become the tenants of the temperate zone; while the inhabitants of the temperate zone would approach nearer to the equator. At the same time, many species previously established on high mountains would begin to descend, in every latitude, towards the middle regions; and those which were confined to the flanks of mountains would make their way into the plains. Analogous changes would also take place in the vegetable kingdom.

If, on the contrary, the heat of the atmosphere be on the increase, the plants and animals of low grounds would ascend to higher levels, the equatorial species would migrate into the temperate zone, and those of the temperate into the arctic circle.

But although some species might thus be preserved, every great change of climate must be fatal to many which can find no place of retreat when their original habitations become unfit for them. For if the general temperature be on the rise, then there is no cooler region whither the polar species can take refuge; if it be on the decline, then the animals and plants previously established between the tropics have no resource. Suppose the general heat of the atmosphere to increase, so that even the arctic region became too warm for the musk-ox and rein-deer, it is clear that they must perish; so, if the torrid zone should lose so much of its heat by the progressive refrigeration of the earth's surface as to be an unfit habitation for apes, boas, bamboos, and palms, these tribes of animals and plants, or, at least, most of the species now belonging to them, would become extinct, for there would be no warmer latitudes for their reception.

It will follow, therefore, that as often as the climates of the globe are passing from the extreme of heat to that of cold — from the summer to the winter of the great year before alluded to * — the migratory movement will be directed constantly from the poles towards the equator; and for this reason the species inhabiting parallel latitudes, in the northern and southern hemispheres, must become widely different. For I assume on grounds before explained, that the original stock of each species is introduced into one spot of the earth only, and, consequently, no species can be at once indigenous in the arctic and antarctic circles.†

But when, on the contrary, a series of changes in the physical geography of the globe, or any other supposed cause, occasions an elevation of the general temperature, — when there is a passage from the winter to one of the vernal or summer seasons of the great

---

* Book I. chap. vii.

† Chap. viii.

cycle of climates,—then the order of the migratory movement is inverted. The different species of animals and plants direct their course from the equator towards the poles; and the northern and southern hemispheres may become peopled, to a great degree, by identical species. Such is not the actual state of the inhabited earth, as I have already shown in my sketch of the geographical distribution of its living productions; and this fact adds an additional proof to the geological evidence, derived from independent sources, that the general temperature has been cooling down during the epochs which immediately preceded our own.

I do not mean to speculate on the entire transposition of a group of animals and plants from tropical to polar latitudes, or the reverse, as a probable, or even possible, event; for although we may believe the mean annual temperature of one zone to be transferrible to another, we know that the same climate cannot be so transferred. Whatever be the general temperature of the earth's surface, comparative equability of heat will characterize the tropical regions; while great periodical variations will belong to the temperate, and still more to the polar, latitudes. These, and many other peculiarities connected with heat and light, depend on fixed astronomical causes, such as the motion of the earth and its position in relation to the sun, and not on those fluctuations of its surface, which may influence the general temperature.

Among many obstacles to such extensive transference of habitations we must not forget the immense lapse of time required, according to the hypothesis before suggested, to bring about a considerable change in climate. During a period so vast, the other causes of extirpation, before enumerated, would exert so powerful an influence as to prevent all, save a very few hardy species, from passing from equatorial to polar regions, or from the tropics to the pole.*

But the power of accommodation to new circumstances is great in certain species, and might enable many to pass from one zone to another, if the mean annual heat of the atmosphere and the ocean were greatly altered. To the marine tribes, especially, such a passage would be possible; for they are less impeded in their migrations by barriers of land, than are the terrestrial by the ocean. Add to this, that the temperature of the ocean is much more uniform than that of the atmosphere investing the land; so that we may easily suppose that most of the testacea, fish, and other classes, might pass from the equatorial into the temperate regions, if the mean temperature of those regions were transposed, although a second expatriation of these species of tropical origin into the arctic and antarctic circles would probably be impossible.

On the principles above explained, if we found that at some former period, as when, for example, our carboniferous strata were deposited, the same tree-ferns and other plants inhabited the regions now occupied by Europe and Van Diemen's Land, we should suspect that the species in question had, at some antecedent period, inhabited lands within the tropics, and that an increase of the mean annual heat had caused them to emigrate into both the temperate zones. There are no geological data, however, as yet obtained, to warrant the opinion that such identity of species existed in the two hemispheres in the era in question.

Let us now consider more particularly the effect of vicissitudes of climate in causing one species to give way before the increasing numbers of some other.

---

* See Book I. chap. vi. vii. and viii.

When temperature forms the barrier which arrests the progress of an animal or plant in a particular direction, the individuals are fewer and less vigorous as they approach the extreme confines of the geographical range of the species. But these stragglers are ready to multiply rapidly on the slightest increase or diminution of heat that may be favourable to them, just as particular insects increase during a hot summer, and certain plants and animals gain ground after a series of congenial seasons.

In almost every district, especially if it be mountainous, there are a variety of species the limits of whose habitations are conterminous, some being unable to proceed farther without encountering too much heat, others too much cold. Individuals, which are thus on the borders of the regions proper to their respective species, are like the outposts of hostile armies, ready to profit by every slight change of circumstances in their favour, and to advance upon the ground occupied by their neighbours and opponents.

The proximity of distinct climates, produced by the inequalities of the earth's surface, brings species possessing very different constitutions into such immediate contact, that their naturalizations are very speedy whenever opportunities of advancing present themselves. Many insects and plants, for example, are common to low plains within the arctic circle, and to lofty mountains in Scotland and other parts of Europe. If the climate, therefore, of the polar regions were transferred to our own latitudes, the species in question would immediately descend from these elevated stations to overrun the low grounds. Invasions of this kind, attended by the expulsion of the pre-occupants, are almost instantaneous, because the change of temperature not only places the one species in a more favourable position, but renders the others sickly and almost incapable of defence.

*These changes inconsistent with the theory of transmutation.* — Lamarck, when speculating on the transmutation of species, supposed every modification in organization and instinct to be brought about slowly and insensibly in an indefinite lapse of ages. But he does not appear to have sufficiently considered how much every alteration in the physical condition of the habitable surface changes the relations of a great number of co-existing species, and that some of these would be ready instantly to avail themselves of the slightest change in their favour, and to multiply to the injury of others. Even if we thought it possible that the palm or the elephant, which now flourish in equatorial regions, could ever learn to bear the variable seasons of our temperate zone, or the rigours of an arctic winter, we might, with no less confidence, affirm, that they must perish before they had time to become habituated to such new circumstances. That they would be displaced by other species as often as the climate varied, may be inferred from the data before explained respecting the local extermination of species produced by the multiplication of others.

Suppose the climate of the highest part of the woody zone of Etna to be transferred to the sea-shore at the base of the mountain, no botanist would anticipate that the olive, lemon-tree, and prickly pear (*Cactus opuntia*), would be able to contend with the oak and chestnut, which would begin forthwith to descend to a lower level; or that these last would be able to stand their ground against the pine, which would also, in the space of a few years, begin to occupy a lower position. We might form some kind of estimate of the time which might be required for the migrations of these plants; whereas we have no data for concluding that any number of thousands of years would be sufficient for one step in the pretended metamorphosis of one species into another, possessing distinct attributes and qualities.

This argument is applicable not merely to *climate*, but to any other cause of mutation. However slowly a lake may be converted into a marsh, or a marsh into a meadow, it is evident that before the lacustrine plants can acquire the power of living in marshes, or the marsh-plants of living in a less humid soil, other species, already existing in the region, and fitted for these several stations, will intrude and keep possession of the ground. So, if a tract of salt water becomes fresh by passing through every intermediate degree of brackishness, still the marine molluscs will never be permitted to be gradually metamorphosed into fluviatile species; because long before any such transformation can take place by slow and insensible degrees, other tribes, already formed to delight in brackish or fresh water, will avail themselves of the change in the fluid, and will, each in their turn, monopolize the space.

It is idle therefore to dispute about the abstract possibility of the conversion of one species into another, when there are known causes so much more active in their nature, which must always intervene and prevent the actual accomplishment of such conversions. A faint image of the certain doom of a species less fitted to struggle with some new condition in a region which it previously inhabited, and where it has to contend with a more vigorous species, is presented by the extirpation of savage tribes of men by the advancing colony of some civilized nation. In this case the contest is merely between two different *races* — two varieties, moreover, of a species which exceeds all others in its aptitude to accommodate its habits to the most extraordinary variations of circumstances. Yet few future events are more certain than the speedy extermination of the Indians of North America and the savages of New Holland in the course of a few centuries, when these tribes will be remembered only in poetry and tradition.

# CHAPTER XI.

## EXTINCTION AND CREATION OF SPECIES.

**Theory of the successive extinction of species consistent with their limited geographical distribution — Opinions of botanists respecting the centres from which plants have been diffused — Whether there are grounds for inferring that the loss, from time to time, of certain animals and plants, is compensated by the introduction of new species? —Whether any evidence of such new creations could be expected within the historical era? (p. 169.) — The question whether the existing species have been created in succession must be decided by geological monuments.**

### *Successive Extinction of Species consistent with their limited Geographical Distribution.*

In the preceding chapters I have pointed out the strict dependence of each species of animal and plant on certain physical conditions in the state of the earth's surface, and on the number and attributes of other organic beings inhabiting the same region. I have also endeavoured to show that all these conditions are in a state of continual fluctuation, the igneous and aqueous agents remodelling, from time to time, the physical geography of the globe, and the migrations of species causing new relations to spring up successively between different organic beings. I have deduced as a corollary, that the species existing at any particular period must, in the course of ages, become extinct one after the other. "They must die out," to borrow an emphatical expression from Buffon; "because Time fights against them."

If the views which I have taken are just, there will be no difficulty in explaining why the habitations of so many species are now restrained within exceedingly narrow limits. Every local revolution, such as those contemplated in the preceding chapter, tends to circumscribe the range of some species, while it enlarges that of others; and if we are led to infer that new species originate in one spot only, each must require time to diffuse itself over a wide area. It will follow, therefore, from the adoption of this hypothesis, that the recent origin of some species, and the high antiquity of others, are equally consistent with the general fact of their limited distribution, some being local, because they have not existed long enough to admit of their wide dissemination; others, because circumstances in the animate or inanimate world have occurred to restrict the range which they may once have obtained.

As considerable modifications in the relative levels of land and sea have taken place in certain regions since the existing species were in being, we can feel no surprize that the zoologist and botanist have hitherto found it difficult to refer the geographical distribution of species to any clear and determinate principles, since they have usually speculated on the phenomena, upon the assumption that the physical geography of the globe had undergone no material alteration since the introduction of the species now living. So long as this assumption was made, the facts relating to the geography of plants and animals appeared capricious in the extreme, and by many the subject was pronounced to be so full of mystery and anomalies, that the establishment of a satisfactory theory was hopeless.

*Centres from which plants have been diffused.*—Some botanists conceived, in accordance with the hypothesis of Willdenow, that mountains were the centres of creation from which the plants now inhabiting large continents have radiated; to which De Candolle and others, with much reason, objected, that mountains, on the contrary, are often the barriers between two provinces of distinct vegetation. The geologist who is acquainted with the extensive modifications which the surface of the earth has undergone in very recent geological epochs, may be able, perhaps, to reconcile both these theories in their application to different regions.

A lofty range of mountains, which is so ancient as to date from a period when the species of animals and plants differed from those now living, will naturally form a barrier between contiguous provinces; but a chain which has been raised, in great part, within the epoch of existing species, and around which new lands have arisen from the sea within that period, will be a centre of peculiar vegetation.

“In France,” observes De Candolle, “the Alps and Cevennes prevent a great number of the plants of the south from spreading themselves to the northward; but it has been remarked that some species have made their way through the gorges of these chains, and are found on their northern sides, principally in those places where they are lower and more interrupted.”* Now the chains here alluded to have probably been of considerable height ever since the era when the existing vegetation began to appear, and were it not for the deep fissures which divide them, they might have caused much more abrupt terminations to the extension of distinct assemblages of species.

---

* Essai Elémentaire, &c. p. 46.

Parts of the Italian peninsula, on the other hand have gained a considerable portion of their present height, since a majority of the marine species now inhabiting the Mediterranean, and probably, also, since the terrestrial plants of the same region, were in being. Large tracts of land have been added, both on the Adriatic and Mediterranean side, to what originally constituted a much narrower range of mountains, if not a chain of islands running nearly north and south, like Corsica and Sardinia. It may therefore be presumed that the Apennines have been a centre whence species have diffused themselves over the contiguous *lower* and *newer* regions. In this and all analogous situations, the doctrine of Willdenow, that species have radiated from the mountains as from centres, may be well founded.

### *Introduction of New Species.*

If the reader should infer, from the facts laid before him in the preceding chapters, that the successive extinction of animals and plants may be part of the constant and regular course of nature, he will naturally inquire whether there are any means provided for the repair of these losses? Is it part of the economy of our system that the habitable globe should, to a certain extent, become depopulated both in the ocean and on the land; or that the variety of species should diminish until some new era arrives when a new and extraordinary effort of creative energy is to be displayed? Or is it possible that new species can be called into being from time to time, and yet that so astonishing a phenomenon can escape the observation of naturalists?

Humboldt has characterized these subjects as among the mysteries which natural science cannot reach; and he observes that the investigation of the origin of beings does not belong to zoological or botanical geography. To geology, however, these topics do strictly appertain; and this science is chiefly interested in inquiries into the state of the animate creation as it now exists, with a view of pointing out its relations to antecedent periods when its condition was different.

Before offering any hypothesis towards the solution of so difficult a problem, let us consider what kind of evidence we ought to expect, in the present state of science, of the first appearance of new animals or plants, if we could imagine the successive creation of species to constitute, like their gradual extinction, a regular part of the economy of nature.

In the first place, it is obviously more easy to prove that a species, once numerously represented in a given district, has ceased to be, than that some other which did not pre-exist has made its appearance — assuming always, for reasons before stated, that single stocks only of each animal and plant are originally created, and that individuals of new species do not suddenly start up in many different places at once.

So imperfect has the science of natural history remained down to our own times, that, within the memory of persons now living, the numbers of known animals and plants have been doubled, or even quadrupled, in many classes. New and often conspicuous species are annually discovered in parts of the old continent, long inhabited by the most civilized nations.

Conscious, therefore, of the limited extent of our information, we always infer, when such discoveries are made, that the beings in question had previously eluded our research; or had at least existed elsewhere, and only migrated at a recent period into the territories where we now find them. It is difficult, even in contemplation, to anticipate the time when we shall be entitled to make any other hypothesis in regard to all the marine tribes, and to by far the greater number of the terrestrial; — such as birds, which possess such unlimited powers of migration; insects which, besides their numbers, are also so capable of being diffused to vast distances; and cryptogamous plants, to which, as to many other classes, both of the animal and vegetable kingdom, similar observations are applicable.

*What kind of evidence of new creations could be expected?* — What kind of proofs, therefore, could we reasonably expect to find of the origin at a particular period of a new species?

Perhaps it may be said in reply that, within the last two or three centuries, some forest tree or new quadruped might have been observed to appear suddenly in those parts of England or France which had been most thoroughly investigated; — that naturalists might have been able to show that no such living being inhabited any other region of the globe, and that there was no tradition of any thing similar having before been observed in the district where it had made its appearance.

Now, although this objection may seem plausible, yet its force will be found to depend entirely on the rate of fluctuation which we suppose to prevail in the animate world, and on the proportion which such conspicuous subjects of the animal and vegetable kingdoms bear to those which are less known and escape our observation. There are perhaps more than a million species of plants and animals, exclusive of the microscopic and infusory animalcules, now inhabiting the terraqueous globe. The terrestrial plants may amount, says De Candolle, to somewhere between 110,000 and 120,000 *; but the data on which this conjecture is founded are considered by many botanists to be vague and unsatisfactory. Sprengel only enumerated, in 1827, about 31,000 known phænogamous, and 6000 cryptogamous plants; but that naturalist omitted many, perhaps 7000 phænogamous, and 1000 cryptogamous species. Mr. Lindley is of opinion that it would be rash, in the present state of science, to speculate on the existence of more than 80,000 phænogamous, and 10,000 cryptogamous plants. "If we take," he says, in a letter to the author on this subject, "37,000 as the number of published phænogamous species, and then add, for the undiscovered species in Asia and New Holland 15,000, in Africa 10,000, and in America 18,000, we have 80,000 species; and if 7000 be the number of published cryptogamous plants, and we allow 3000 for the undiscovered species (making 10,000), there would then be, on the whole, 90,000 species."

It was supposed by Linnæus that there were four or five species of insects in the world for each phænogamous plant: but if we may judge from the relative proportion of the two classes in Great Britain, the number of insects must be still greater; for the total

---

* Géog. des Plantes. Dict. des Sci.

number of British insects, "according to the last census," is about 12,500 *, whereas there are only 1500 phænogamous plants indigenous to our island. As the insects are much more numerous in hot countries than in our temperate latitudes, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that there are more than half a million species in the world.

The number of known mammifers, according to Temminck, exceeds 800, and Baron Cuvier estimated the amount of known fishes at 6000. Nearly 6000 species of birds have likewise been ascertained.† We have still to add the reptiles, and all the invertebrated animals, exclusive of insects. It remains, in a great degree, mere matter of conjecture what proportion the aquatic tribes may bear to the denizens of the land; but the habitable surface beneath the waters can hardly be estimated at less than double that of the continents and islands, even admitting that a very considerable area is destitute of life, in consequence of great depth, cold, darkness, and other circumstances. In the late polar expedition it was found that, in some regions, as in Baffin's Bay, there were marine animals inhabiting the bottom at great depths, where the temperature of the water was below the freezing point. That there is life at much greater profundities in warmer regions, may be confidently inferred. I have before stated that marine plants not only exist, but acquire vivid colours at depths where, to our senses, there would be darkness deep as night.

The ocean teems with life—the class of *polyps* alone are conjectured by Lamarck to be as strong in individuals as insects. Every tropical reef is described as covered with corals and sponges, and swarming with crustacea, echini, and testacea; while almost every tide-washed rock in the world is carpeted with fuci and supports some corallines, actiniæ, and mollusca. There are innumerable forms in the seas of the warmer zones, which have scarcely begun to attract the attention of the naturalist; and there are parasitic animals without number, three or four of which are sometimes appropriated to one genus, as to the *Balæna*, for example. Even though we concede, therefore, that the geographical range of marine species is more extensive in general than that of the terrestrial (the temperature of the sea being more uniform, and the land impeding less the migrations of the oceanic than the ocean those of the terrestrial species), yet it seems probable that the aquatic tribes far exceed in number the inhabitants of the land.

---

* See Catalogue of Brit. Insects, by John Curtis, Esq.

† See Quarterly Review, No. xciv. p. 337.

Without insisting on this point, it may be safe to assume, that, exclusive of microscopic beings, there are between one and two millions of species now inhabiting the terraqueous globe; so that if only one of these were to become extinct annually, and one new one were to be every year called into being, much more than a million of years might be required to bring about a complete revolution in organic life.

I am not hazarding at present any hypothesis as to the probable rate of change; but none will deny that, when the *annual* birth and the *annual* death of one species on the globe is proposed as a mere speculation, this at least is to imagine no slight degree of instability in the animate creation. If we divide the surface of the earth into twenty regions of equal area, one of these might comprehend a space of land and water about equal in dimensions to Europe, and might contain a twentieth part of the million of species which may be assumed to exist in the animal kingdom. In this region one species only would, according to the rate of mortality before assumed, perish in twenty years, or only five out of fifty thousand in the course of a century. But as a considerable proportion of the whole would belong to the aquatic classes, with which we have a very imperfect acquaintance, we must exclude them from our consideration; and if they constitute half of the entire number, then one species only might be lost in forty years among the terrestrial tribes. Now the mammalia, whether terrestrial or aquatic, bear so small a proportion to other classes of animals, forming less, perhaps, than one thousandth part of the whole, that, if the longevity of species in the different orders were equal, a vast period must elapse before it would come to the turn of this conspicuous class to lose one of their number. If one species only of the whole animal kingdom died out in forty years, no more than one mammifer might disappear in 40,000 years, in a region of the dimensions of Europe.

It is easy, therefore, to see, that, in a small portion of such an area, in countries, for example, of the size of England and France, periods of much greater duration must elapse before it would be possible to authenticate the first appearance of one of the larger plants and animals, assuming the annual birth and death of one species to be the rate of vicissitude in the animate creation throughout the world.

The observations of naturalists, upon living species, may, in the course of future centuries, accumulate positive data, from which an insight into the laws which govern this part of our terrestrial system may be derived; but, in the present deficiency of historical records, we have traced up the subject to that point where geological monuments alone are capable of leading us on to the discovery of ulterior truths. To these, therefore, we must now appeal, carefully examining the strata of recent formation wherein the remains of *living* species, both animal and vegetable, are known to occur. We must study these strata in strict reference to their chronological order, as deduced from their superposition, and other relations. From these sources we may learn which of the species, now our contemporaries, have survived the greatest revolutions of the earth's surface; which of them have co-existed with the greatest number of animals and plants now extinct, and which have made their appearance only when the animate world had nearly attained its present condition.

From such data we may be enabled to infer, whether species have been called into existence in succession, or all at one period; whether singly, or by groups simultaneously; whether the antiquity of man be as high as that of any of the inferior beings which now share the planet with him, or whether the human species is one of the most recent of the whole.

To some of these questions we can even now return a satisfactory answer; and with regard to the rest, we have some data to guide conjecture, and to enable us to speculate with advantage: but it would be premature to anticipate such discussions until I have laid before the reader an ample body of materials amassed by the industry of modern geologists.

# CHAPTER XII.

## EFFECTS PRODUCED BY THE POWERS OF VITALITY ON THE STATE OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE.

**Modifications in physical geography caused by organic beings — Why the vegetable soil does not augment in thickness — The theory, that vegetation is an antagonist power counterbalancing the degradation caused by running water, untenable (p. 180.) — Conservative influence of vegetation (p. 184.)—Rain diminished by felling of forests — Distribution of American forests dependent on direction of predominant winds (p. 188.) — Influence of man in modifying the physical geography of the globe.**

The second branch of our inquiry, respecting changes of the organic world, relates to the processes by which the remains of animals and plants become fossil, or, to speak still more generally, to all the effects produced by the powers of vitality on the surface and shell of the earth.

Before entering on the principal division of this subject, the imbedding and preservation of animal and vegetable remains, I shall offer a few remarks on the superficial modifications caused directly by the agency of organic beings, as when the growth of certain plants covers the slope of a mountain with peat, or converts a swamp into dry land; or when vegetation prevents the soil, in certain localities, from being washed away by running water.

In considering alterations of this kind, brought about in the physical geography of particular tracts, we are too apt to think exclusively of that part of the earth's surface which has emerged from beneath the waters, and with which alone, as terrestrial beings, we are familiar. Here the direct power of animals and plants to cause any important variation is, of necessity, very limited, except in checking the progress of that decay of which the land is the chief theatre. But if we extend our views, and, instead of contemplating the dry land, consider that larger portion which is assigned to the aquatic tribes, we discover the great influence of the living creation, in imparting varieties of conformation to the solid exterior which the agency of inanimate causes alone could not produce.

Thus, when timber is floated into the sea, it is often drifted to vast distances, and subsides in spots where there might have been no deposit, at that time and place, if the earth had not been tenanted by living beings. If, therefore, in the course of ages, a hill of wood, or lignite, be thus formed in the subaqueous regions, a change in the submarine geography may be said to have resulted from the action of organic powers. So in regard to the growth of coral reefs; it is probable that almost all the matter of which they are composed is supplied by mineral springs, which often rise up at the bottom of the sea, and which, on land, abound throughout volcanic regions hundreds of leagues in extent. The matter thus constantly given out could not go on accumulating for ever in the waters, but would be precipitated in the abysses of the sea, even if there were no polyps and testacea; but these animals arrest and secrete the carbonate of lime on the summits of submarine mountains, and form reefs many hundred feet in thickness, and hundreds of miles in length, where, but for them, none might ever have existed.

*Why the vegetable soil does not augment in thickness.* — If no such voluminous masses are formed on the land, it is not from the want of solid matter in the structure of terrestrial animals and plants; but merely because, as I have so often stated, the continents are those parts of the globe where accessions of matter can scarcely ever take place — where, on the contrary, the most solid parts already formed are, each in their turn, exposed to gradual degradation. The quantity of timber and vegetable matter which grows in a tropical forest in the course of a century is enormous, and multitudes of animal skeletons are scattered there during the same period, besides innumerable land-shells and other organic substances. The aggregate of these materials, therefore, might constitute a mass greater in volume than that which is produced in any coral-reef during the same lapse of years; but, although this process should continue on the land for ever, no mountains of wood or bone would be seen stretching far and wide over the country, or pushing out bold promontories into the sea. The whole solid mass is either devoured by animals, or decomposes, as does a portion of the rock and soil on which the animals and plants are supported.

The decomposition of the strata themselves, especially of their alkaline ingredients and of the organic remains which they so frequently include, is one source from whence running water and the atmosphere may derive the materials which are absorbed by the roots and leaves of plants. Another source is the passage into a gaseous form of even the hardest parts of animals and plants which die and putrefy in the air, where they are soon resolved into the elements of which they are composed; and while a portion of these constituents is volatilized, the rest is taken up by rain water, and sinks into the earth, or flows towards the sea; so that they enter again and again into the composition of different organic beings.

The principal elements found in plants are hydrogen, carbon, and oxygen; so that water and the atmosphere contain all of them, either in their own composition or in solution.* The constant supply of these elements is maintained not only by the putrefaction of animal and vegetable substances, and the decay of rocks, but also by the copious evolution of carbonic acid and other gases from volcanos and mineral springs, and by the effects of ordinary evaporation, whereby aqueous vapours are made to rise from the ocean, and to circulate round the globe.

It is well known that, when two gases of different specific gravity are brought into contact, even though the heavier be the lowermost, they soon become uniformly diffused by mutual absorption through the whole space which they occupy. By virtue of this law, the heavy carbonic acid finds its way upwards through the lighter air of the atmosphere, and conveys nourishment to the lichen which covers the mountain top.

The fact, therefore, that the vegetable mould which covers the earth's surface does not decrease in thickness, will not altogether bear out the argument which was founded upon it by Playfair. This vegetable soil, he observes, consists partly of loose earthy materials, easily removed, in the form of sand and gravel; partly of finer particles, suspended in the waters, which tinge those of some rivers continually, and those of all occasionally, when they are flooded. "The soil," he supposes, "although continually diminished from this cause, remains the same in quantity, or at least nearly the same, and must have done so ever since the earth was the receptacle of animal or vegetable life. The soil, therefore, is augmented from other causes, just as much, at an average, as it is diminished by that now mentioned; and this augmentation evidently can proceed from nothing but the constant and slow disintegration of the rocks."*

---

* See some good remarks on the Formation of Soils, Bakewell's Geology, chap. xviii.

That the repair of the *earthy* portion of the soil can proceed, as Playfair suggests, only from the decomposition of rocks, may be admitted; but the *vegetable* matter may be supplied, and is actually furnished, in a great degree, by absorption from the atmosphere; so that in level situations, such as in platforms that intervene between valleys where the action of running water is very trifling, the vegetable particles carried off by the rain may be perpetually restored, not by the waste of the rock below, but from the air above.

If the quantity of food consumed by terrestrial animals, and the elements imbibed by the roots and leaves of plants, were derived entirely from that supply of hydrogen, carbon, oxygen, azote, and other elements, given out into the atmosphere and the waters by the putrescence of organic substances, then we might imagine that the vegetable mould would, after a series of years, neither gain nor lose a single particle by the action of organic beings; and this conclusion is not far from the truth; but the operation which renovates the vegetable and animal mould is by no means so simple as that here supposed. Thousands of carcasses of terrestrial animals are floated down, every century, into the sea; and, together with forests of drift-timber, are imbedded in subaqueous deposits, where their elements are imprisoned in solid strata, and may there remain throughout whole geological epochs before they again become subservient to the purposes of life.

---

* Illust. of Hutt. Theory, § 103.

On the other hand, fresh supplies are derived by the atmosphere, and by running water, as before stated, from the disintegration of rocks and their organic contents, and through the agency of mineral springs from the interior of the earth, from whence all the elements before mentioned, which enter principally into the composition of animals and vegetables, are continually evolved. Even nitrogen has been recently found, by Dr. Daubeny, to be contained very generally in the waters of mineral springs.

*Vegetation not an antagonist power counterbalancing the action of running water.*—If we suppose that the copious supply from the nether regions, by springs and volcanic vents, of carbonic acid and other gases, together with the decomposition of rocks, may be just sufficient to counterbalance that loss of matter which, having already served for the nourishment of animals and plants, is annually carried down in organized forms, and buried in subaqueous strata, we concede the utmost that is consistent with probability. An opinion, however, has been expressed, that the processes of vegetable life, by absorbing various gases from the atmosphere, cause so large a mass of solid matter to accumulate on the surface of the land, that this mass alone may constitute a great counterpoise to all the matter transported to lower levels by the aqueous agents of decay. Torrents and rivers, it is said—the waves of the sea and marine currents—act upon lines only; but the power of vegetation to absorb the elastic and non-elastic fluids circulating round the earth, extends over the whole surface of the continents. By the silent but universal action of this great antagonist power, the spoliation and waste caused by running water on the land, and by the movements of the ocean, are neutralized, and even counterbalanced.*

In opposition to these views, I conceive that we shall form a juster estimate of the influence of vegetation if we consider it as being in a slight degree conservative, and capable of retarding the waste of land, but not of acting as an antagonist power. The vegetable mould is seldom more than a few feet in thickness, and frequently does not exceed a few inches; and we by no means find that its volume is more considerable on those parts of our continents which we can prove, by geological data, to have been elevated at more ancient periods, and where, consequently, there has been the greatest time for the accumulation of vegetable matter, produced throughout successive zoological epochs. On the contrary, these higher and older regions are more frequently denuded, so as to expose the bare rock to the action of the sun and air.

We find in the torrid zone, where the growth of plants is most rank and luxurious, that accessions of matter due to their agency are by no means the most conspicuous. Indeed it is in these latitudes, where the vegetation is most active, that, for reasons to be explained in the next chapter, even those superficial peat mosses are unknown which cover a large area in some parts of our temperate zone. If the operation of animal and vegetable life could restore to the general surface of the continents a portion of the elements of those disintegrated rocks, of which such enormous masses are swept down annually into the sea, the effects would long ere this have constituted one of the most striking features in the structure and composition of our continents. All the great steppes and table-lands of the world, where the action of running water is feeble, would have become the grand repositories of organic matter, accumulated without that intermixture of earthy sediment which so generally characterizes the subaqueous strata.

---

* See Professor Sedgwick's Address to the Geological Society on the Anniversary, Feb. 1831, p. 24.

Even the formation of peat in certain districts where the climate is cold and moist has not, in every instance, a conservative tendency. A peat-moss often acts like a vast sponge, absorbing water in large quantities, and swelling to the height of many yards above the surrounding country. In that case the turfy covering of the bog serves, like the skin of a bladder, to retain for a while the fluid within; and when that skin bursts, as has often happened in Ireland, and many parts of the Continent, a violent inundation ensues. Examples will be mentioned in a subsequent chapter, where the muddy torrent has hollowed out ravines, and borne along rocks and sand, in countries where such ravages could not have happened but for the existence of peat.

I may explain more clearly the kind of force which

I imagine vegetation to exert, by comparing it to the action of frost, which augments the height of some few alpine summits, by causing masses of perpetual snow to accumulate upon them, or fills up some valleys with glaciers; but although by this process of congelation the rain-water that has risen by evaporation from the sea is retained for a while in a solid form upon the land, and though some elevated spots may be protected from waste by a constant covering of ice, yet, on the other hand, the sudden melting of snow often accelerates the degradation of rock. Although every year fresh snow and ice are formed, as also more vegetable and animal matter, yet there is no increase; the one melts, the other putrefies, or is drifted down to the sea by rivers. If this were not the case, frost might be considered as an antagonist power, as well as the action of animal and vegetable life.

I have already stated that, in the known operation of the *igneous* causes, a real antagonist power is found, which may counterbalance the levelling action of running water*; and there seems no good reason for presuming that the upheaving and depressing force of earthquakes, together with the ejection of matter by volcanos, may not be fully adequate to restore that inequality of the surface which rivers and the waves and currents of the ocean annually tend to lessen. If a counterpoise be derived from this source, the quantity and elevation of land above the sea may for ever remain the same, in spite of the action of the aqueous causes, which, if thus counteracted, may never be able to reduce the surface of the earth more nearly to a state of equilibrium than that which it has now attained; and, on the other hand, the force of the aqueous agents themselves might thus continue for ever unimpaired. This permanence of the average intensity of the powers now in operation would account for any amount of disturbance or degradation of the earth's crust, so far as the *mere quantity* of movement or decay is concerned; provided only that indefinite periods of time are contemplated.

---

* Vol. I. p. 255.; Vol. II. p. 398.

As to the intensity of the disturbing causes at particular epochs, their effects have as yet been studied for too short a time to enable us fully to compare the signs of ancient convulsions with the permanent monuments left in the earth's crust by the events of the last few thousand years. But, notwithstanding the small number of changes which have been witnessed and carefully recorded, observation has at least shown that our knowledge of the extent of the subterranean agency, as now developed from time to time is in its infancy; and there can be no doubt that great partial alterations in the structure of the earth's crust are brought about in volcanic regions, without any interruption to the general tranquillity of the habitable surface.

*Conservative influence of vegetation.*—If, then, vegetation cannot act as an antagonist power amid the mighty agents of change which are always modifying the surface of the globe, let us next inquire how far its influence is conservative,—how far it may retard the levelling effects of running water, which it cannot oppose, much less counterbalance.

It is well known that a covering of herbage and shrubs may protect a loose soil from being carried away by rain, or even by the ordinary action of a river, and may prevent hills of loose sand from being blown away by the wind; for the roots bind together the separate particles into a firm mass, and the leaves intercept the rain-water, so that it dries up gradually, instead of flowing off in a mass and with great velocity. The old Italian hydrographers make frequent mention of the increased degradation which has followed the clearing away of natural woods in several parts of Italy. A remarkable example was afforded in the Upper Val d'Arno, in Tuscany, on the removal of the woods clothing the steep declivities of the hills by which that valley is bounded. When the ancient forest laws were abolished by the Grand Duke Joseph, during the last century, a considerable tract of surface in the Cassentina (the Clausentinium of the Romans) was denuded, and immediately the quantity of sand and soil washed down into the Arno increased enormously. Frisi, alluding to such occurrences, observes, that as soon as the bushes and plants were removed, the waters flowed off more rapidly, and, in the manner of floods, swept away the vegetable soil.*

This effect of vegetation is of high interest to the geologist, when he is considering the formation of those valleys which have been principally due to the action of rivers. The spaces intervening between valleys, whether they be flat or ridgy, when covered with vegetation, may scarcely undergo the slightest waste, as the surface may be protected by the green sward of grass; and this may be renewed, in the manner before described, from elements derived from rain-water and the atmosphere. Hence, while the river is continually bearing down matter in the alluvial plain, and undermining the cliffs on each side of every valley, the height of the intervening rising grounds may remain stationary.

---

* Treatise on Rivers and Torrents, p. 5. Garston's translation.

In this manner, a cone of loose scoriæ, sand, and ashes, such as Monte Nuovo, may, when it has once become densely clothed with herbage and shrubs, suffer scarcely any further dilapidation ; and the perfect state of the cones of hundreds of extinct volcanos in France, Campania, Sicily, and elsewhere, may prove nothing whatever, either as to their relative or absolute antiquity. We may be enabled to infer, from the integrity of such conical hills of incoherent materials, that no flood can have passed over the countries where they are situated, since their formation; but the atmospheric action alone, in spots where there happen to be no torrents, and where the surface was clothed with vegetation, could scarcely in any lapse of ages have destroyed them.

During a tour in Spain, in 1830, I was surprised to see a district of gently undulating ground in Catalonia, consisting of red and grey sandstone, and in some parts of red marl, almost entirely denuded of herbage; while the roots of the pines, holm oaks, and some other trees, were half exposed, as if the soil had been washed away by a flood. Such is the state of the forests, for example, between Oristo and Vich, and near San Lorenzo. But, being overtaken by a violent thunder-storm, in the month of August, I saw the whole surface, even the highest levels of some flat-topped hills, streaming with mud, while on every declivity the devastation of torrents was terrific. The peculiarities in the physiognomy of the district were at once explained; and I was taught that, in speculating on the greater effects which the direct action of rain may once have produced on the surface of certain parts of England, we need not revert to periods when the heat of the climate was *tropical.*

In the torrid zone the degradation of land is generally more rapid; but the waste is by no means proportioned to the superior quantity of rain or the suddenness of its fall, the transporting power of water being counteracted by a greater luxuriance of vegetation. A geologist who is no stranger to tropical countries observes, that the softer rocks would speedily be washed away in such regions, if the numerous roots of plants were not matted together in such a manner as to produce considerable resistance to the destructive power of the rains. The parasitical and creeping plants also entwine in every possible direction, so as to render the forests nearly impervious, and the trees possess forms and leaves best calculated to shoot off the heavy rains; which, when they have thus been broken in their fall, are quickly absorbed by the ground beneath, or, when thrown into the drainage depressions give rise to furious torrents.*

## *Influence of Man in modifying the Physical Geography of the Globe.*

Before concluding this chapter, I shall offer a few observations on the influence of man in modifying the physical geography of the globe; for we must class his agency among the powers of organic nature.

*Felling of forests.* — The felling of forests has been attended, in many countries, by a diminution of rain, as in Barbadoes and Jamaica. † For in tropical countries, where the quantity of aqueous vapour in the atmosphere is great, but where, on the other hand, the direct rays of the sun are most powerful, any impediment to the free circulation of air, or any screen which shades the earth from the solar rays, becomes a source of humidity; and wherever dampness and cold have begun to be generated by such causes, the condensation of vapour continues. The leaves, moreover, of all plants are alembics, and some of those in the torrid zone have the remarkable property of distilling water, thus contributing to prevent the earth from becoming parched up.

---

* De la Beche, Geol. Man., p. 184. first ed.

† Phil. Trans., vol. ii. p. 294.

*Distribution of the American forests.*—There can be no doubt, then, that the state of the climate, especially the humidity of the atmosphere, influences vegetation, and that, in its turn, vegetation re-acts upon the climate; but some writers seem to have attributed too much importance to the influence of forests, particularly those of America, as if they were the primary cause of the moisture of the climate.

The theory of a modern author on this subject "that forests exist in those parts of America only where the predominant winds carry with them a considerable quantity of moisture from the ocean," seems far more rational. In all countries, he says, "having a summer heat exceeding 70°, the presence or absence of natural woods, and their greater or less luxuriance, may be taken as a measure of the amount of humidity, and of the fertility of the soil. Short and heavy rains, in a warm country, will produce grass, which, having its roots near the surface, springs up in a few days, and withers when the moisture is exhausted; but transitory rains, however heavy, will not nourish trees; because, after the surface is saturated with water, the rest runs off, and the moisture lodged in the soil neither sinks deep enough, nor is in sufficient quantity to furnish the giants of the forest with the necessary sustenance. It may be assumed that twenty inches of rain falling moderately, or at intervals, will leave a greater permanent supply in the soil than forty inches falling, as it sometimes does in the torrid zone, in as many hours."*

"In all regions," he continues, "where ranges of mountains intercept the course of the constant or predominant winds, the country on the windward side of the mountains will be moist, and that on the leeward dry; and hence parched deserts will generally be found on the west side of countries within the tropics, and on the east side of those beyond them, the prevailing winds in these cases being generally in opposite directions. On this principle, the position of forests in North and South America may be explained. Thus, for example, in the region within the thirtieth parallel, the moisture swept up by the trade-wind from the Atlantic is precipitated in part upon the mountains of Brazil, which are but low, and so distributed as to extend far into the interior. The portion which remains is borne westward, and, losing a little as it proceeds, is at length arrested by the Andes, where it falls down in showers on their summits. The aërial current, now deprived of all the humidity with which it can part, arrives in a state of complete exsiccation at Peru, where, consequently, no rain falls. In the same manner the Ghauts in India, a chain only three or four thousand feet high, intercept the whole moisture of the atmosphere, having copious rains on their windward side, while on the other the weather remains clear and dry. The rains in this case change regularly from the west side to the east, and vice versâ, *with the monsoons*. But in the region of America, beyond the thirtieth parallel, the Andes serve as a screen to intercept the moisture brought by the prevailing winds from the Pacific Ocean: rains are copious on their summits, and in Chili on their *western* declivities; but none falls on the plains to the *eastward*, except occasionally when the wind blows from the Atlantic."*

---

* Maclaren, art. America, Encyc. Britannica.

I have been more particular in explaining these views, because they appear to place in a true light the dependence of vegetation on climate, the humidity being increased, and more uniformly diffused throughout the year, by the gradual spreading of wood.

It has been affirmed, that formerly, when France and England were covered with wood, Europe was much colder than at present; that the winters in Italy were longer, and that the Seine, and many other rivers, froze more regularly every winter than now. M. Arago, in a recent essay on this subject, has endeavoured to show, by tables of observations on the congelation of the Rhine, Danube, Rhone, Po, Seine, and other rivers, at different periods, that there is no reason to believe the cold to have been in general more intense in ancient times.† He admits, however, that the climate of Tuscany has been so far modified, by the removal of wood, as that the winters are less cold; but the summers also, he contends, are less hot than of old; and the summers, according to him, were formerly hotter in France than in our own times. His evidence is derived chiefly from documents showing that wine was made three centuries ago in the Vivarais and several other provinces, at an earlier season, at greater elevations, and in higher latitudes than are now found suitable to the vine.

---

* Maclaren, art. America, Encyc. Britannica, where the position of the American forests, in accordance with this theory, is laid down in a map.

† Annuaire par le Bureau des Long. 1834.

In the United States of North America it is unquestionable that the rapid *clearing* of the country has rendered the winters less severe and the summers less hot; in other words, the extreme temperature of January and July have been observed from year to year to approach nearer to each other. Whether in this case, or in France, the *mean* temperature has been raised, seems by no means as yet decided; but there is no doubt that the climate has become, as Buffon would have said, "less excessive."

The modifications of the surface, resulting from human agency, are only great when we have obtained so much knowledge of the working of the laws of nature as to be enabled to use them as powerful instruments to effect our purposes. We command nature, according to the saying of the philosopher, by obeying her laws; and for this reason we can never materially interfere with any of the great changes which either the aqueous or igneous causes are bringing about on the earth. In vain would the inhabitants of Italy strive to prevent the tributaries of the Po and Adige from bearing down, annually, an immense volume of sand and mud from the Alps and Apennines; in vain would they toil to reconvey to the mountains the mass torn from them year by year, and deposited in the form of sediment in the Adriatic. Yet they have been able to vary the distribution of this sediment over a considerable area, by embanking the rivers, and preventing the sand and mud from being spread by annual inundations over the plains.

I have explained how the form of the delta of the

Po has been altered by this system of embankment, and how much more rapid have been the accessions of land at the mouths of the Po and Adige within the last twenty centuries. There is a limit, however, to these modifications, since the danger of floods augments with the increasing height of the river-beds, while the expense of maintaining the barrier is continually enhanced, as well as the difficulty of draining the low surrounding country. "In the Ganges," says Major R. H. Colebrooke, "no sooner is a slight covering of soil observed on a new sand-bank than the island is cultivated; water-melons, cucumbers, and mustard, become the produce of the first year; and rice is often seen growing near the water's edge, where the mud is in large quantity. Such islands may be swept away before they have acquired a sufficient degree of stability to resist permanently the force of the stream; but if, by repeated additions of soil, they acquire height and firmness, the natives take possession, and bring over their families, cattle, and effects. They choose the highest spots for the sites of villages, where they erect their dwellings with as much confidence as they would do on the main land; for, although the foundation is sandy, the uppermost soil, being interwoven with the roots of grass and other plants, and hardened by the sun, is capable of withstanding all attacks of the river. These islands often grow to a considerable size, and endure for the lives of the new possessors, being only at last destroyed by the same gradual process of undermining and encroachment to which the banks of the Ganges are subject."*

If Bengal were inhabited by a nation more advanced in opulence and agricultural skill, they might, perhaps, succeed in defending these possessions against the ravages of the stream for much longer periods; but no human power could ever prevent the Ganges or the Mississippi from making and unmaking islands. By fortifying one spot against the set of the current, its force is only diverted against some other point; and, after a vast expense of time and labour, the property of individuals may be saved, but no addition would thus be made to the sum of productive land. It may be doubted whether any system could be devised so conducive to *national* wealth as the simple plan pursued by the peasants of Hindostan, who, wasting no strength in attempts to thwart one of the great operations of nature, permit the alluvial surface to be perpetually renovated, and find their losses in one place compensated in some other, so that they continue to reap an undiminished harvest from a virgin soil.

---

* Asiatic Trans., vol. vii.

To the geologist the Gangetic islands and their migratory colonies may present an epitome of the globe as tenanted by man; for during every century we cede some territory which the earthquake has sunk, or the volcano has covered by its fiery products, or which the ocean has devoured by its waves. On the other hand, we gain possession of new lands, which rivers, tides, or volcanic ejections have formed, or which subterranean causes have upheaved from the deep. Whether the human species will outlast the whole or a great part of the continents and islands now seen above the waters, is a question far beyond the reach of our conjectures; but thus much may be inferred from geological data, — that if such should be its fate, it will be no more than has already been the lot of pre-existing species, some of which have, ere now, outlived the form and distribution of land and sea which prevailed at the era of their birth.*

I have before shown, when treating of the excavation of new estuaries in Holland by inroads of the ocean, as also of the changes on our own coasts, that although the conversion of sea into land by artificial labours may be great, yet it must always be in subordination to the great movements of the tides and currents.† If, in addition to the assistance obtained by parliamentary grants for defending Dunwich from the waves, all the resources of Europe had been directed to the same end, the existence of that port might possibly have been prolonged for many centuries.‡ But, in the mean time, the current would have continued to sweep away portions from the adjoining cliffs on each side, rounding off the whole line of coast into its present form, until at length the town, projecting as a narrow promontory, must have become exposed to the irresistible fury of the waves.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that the control which man can obtain over the igneous agents is less even than that which he may exert over the aqueous. He cannot modify the upheaving or depressing force of earthquakes, or the periods or degree of violence of volcanic eruptions; and on these causes the inequalities of the earth's surface, and, consequently, the shape of the sea and land, appear mainly to depend. The utmost that man can hope to effect in this respect is occasionally to divert the course of a lava-stream, and to prevent the burning matter, for a season, from overwhelming a city, or some other of the proudest works of human industry.

---

* See book iv. chap. ix. † Book ii. chap. vii. ‡ Vol. II. p. 31.

No application, perhaps, of human skill and labour tends so greatly to vary the state of the habitable surface, as that employed in the drainage of lakes and marshes, since not only the *stations* of many animals and plants, but the general climate of a district, may thus be modified. It is also a kind of alteration to which it is difficult to find any thing analogous in the agency of inferior beings; for we ought always, before we decide that any part of the influence of man is novel and anomalous, carefully to consider the powers of all other animated agents which may be limited or superseded by him. Many who have reasoned on these subjects seem to have forgotten that the human race often succeeds to the discharge of functions previously fulfilled by other species; a topic on which I have already offered some hints, when explaining how the distribution and numbers of each species are dependent on the state of contemporary beings.

Suppose the growth of some of the larger terrestrial plants, or, in other words, the extent of forests, to be diminished by man, and the climate to be thereby modified, it does not follow that this kind of innovation is unprecedented. It is a change in the state of vegetation, and such may often have been the result of the appearance of new species upon the earth. The multiplication, for example, of certain insects in parts of Germany, during the last century, destroyed more trees than man, perhaps, could have felled during an equal period.

It would be rash, however, to pretend to decide how far the power of man to modify the surface may differ in kind or degree from that of other living beings; the problem is certainly more complex than many who have speculated on such topics have imagined. If land be raised from the sea, the greatest alteration in its physical condition, which could ever arise from the influence of organic beings, would probably be produced by the first immigration of terrestrial plants, whereby the new tract would become covered with vegetation. The change next in importance would seem to be when animals first enter, and modify the proportionate numbers of certain species of plants. If there be any anomaly in the intervention of man, in farther varying the relative numbers in the vegetable kingdom, it may not so much consist in the kind or absolute quantity of alteration, as in the circumstance that *a single species,* in this case, would exert, by its superior power and universal distribution, an influence equal to that of hundreds of other terrestrial animals.

If we inquire whether man, by his direct power, or by the changes which he may give rise to indirectly, tends, upon the whole, to lessen or increase the inequalities of the earth's surface, we shall incline, perhaps, to the opinion that he is a levelling agent. In mining operations he conveys upwards a certain quantity of materials from the bowels of the earth; but, on the other hand, much rock is taken annually from the land, in the shape of ballast, and afterwards thrown into the sea, and by this means, in spite of prohibitory laws, many harbours, in various parts of the world, have been blocked up. We rarely transport heavy materials to higher levels, and our pyramids and cities are chiefly constructed of stone brought down from more elevated situations. By ploughing up thousands of square miles, and exposing a surface for part of the year to the action of the elements, we assist the abrading force of rain, and diminish the conservative effects of vegetation.

But the aggregate force exerted by man is truly insignificant, when we consider the operations of the great physical agents, whether aqueous or igneous, of the inanimate world. If all the nations of the earth should attempt to quarry away the lava which flowed during one eruption from the Icelandic volcanos in 1783, and the two following years, and should attempt to consign it to the deepest abysses of the ocean, they might toil for thousands of years before their task was accomplished. Yet the matter borne down by the Ganges and Burrampooter, in a single year, probably very much exceeds, in weight and volume, the mass of Icelandic lava produced by that great eruption.*

---

* Vol. I. p. 367.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## INCLOSING OF FOSSILS IN PEAT, BLOWN SAND, AND VOLCANIC EJECTIONS.

Division of the subject — Imbedding of organic remains in deposits on emerged land — Growth of peat — Site of ancient forests in Europe now occupied by peat—Bog iron-ore (p. 204.) Preservation of animal substances in peat — Miring of quadrupeds — Bursting of the Solway moss — Imbedding of organic bodies and human remains in blown sand (p. 210.) — Moving sands of African deserts — De Luc on their recent origin — Buried temple of Ipsambul — Dried carcasses in the sands — Towns overwhelmed by sand-floods — Imbedding of organic and other remains in volcanic formations on the land.

*Division of the subject.* — The next subject of inquiry is the mode in which the remains of animals and plants become fossil, or are buried in the earth by natural causes. M. Constant Prevost has observed, that the effects of geological causes are divisible into two great classes; those produced on the surface during the submersion of land beneath the waters, and those which take place after its emersion. Agreeably to this classification, I shall consider, first, in what manner animal and vegetable remains become included and preserved in deposits on emerged land, or that part of the surface which is not *permanently* covered by water, whether of seas or lakes; secondly, the manner in which organic remains become imbedded in subaqueous deposits.

Under the first division, I shall treat of the following topics: — 1st, the growth of peat, and the preservation of vegetable and animal remains therein; — 2dly, the burying of organic remains in blown sand; — 3dly, of the same in the ejections and alluviums of volcanos; — 4thly, in alluviums generally, and in the ruins of landslips; — 5thly, in the mud and stalagmite of caves and fissures.

### *Growth of Peat, and Preservation of Vegetable and Animal Remains therein.*

The generation of peat, when not completely under water, is confined to moist situations, where the temperature is low, and where vegetables may decompose without putrefying. It may consist of any of the numerous plants which are capable of growing in such *stations;* but a species of moss (*Sphagnum palustre*) constitutes a considerable part of the peat found in marshes of the north of Europe; this plant having the property of throwing up new shoots in its upper part, while its lower extremities are decaying.* Reeds, rushes, and other aquatic plants may usually be traced in peat; and their organization is often so entire that there is no difficulty in discriminating the distinct species.

*Analysis of peat.* — In general, says Sir H. Davy, one hundred parts of dry peat contain from sixty to ninety-nine parts of matter destructible by fire; and the residuum consists of earths usually of the same kind as the substratum of clay, marl, gravel, or rock, on which they are found, together with oxide of iron. "The peat of the chalk counties of England," observes the same writer, "contains much gypsum; but I have found very little in any specimens from Ireland or Scotland, and in general these peats contain very little saline matter."* From the researches of Dr. Macculloch, it appears that peat is intermediate between simple vegetable matter and lignite, the conversion of peat to lignite being gradual, and being brought about by the prolonged action of water.†

---

* For a catalogue of the plants which contribute to the generation of peat, see Dr. Rennie on Peat, pp. 171—178.; and Dr. Macculloch's Western Isles, vol. i. p. 129.

*Peat abundant in cold and humid climates.* — Peat is sometimes formed on a declivity in mountainous regions, where there is much moisture; but in such situations it rarely, if ever, exceeds four feet in thickness. In bogs, and in low grounds into which alluvial peat is drifted, it is found forty feet thick, and upwards; but in such cases it generally owes one half of its volume to the water which it contains. It has seldom, if ever, been discovered within the tropics; and it rarely occurs in the valleys, even in the south of France and Spain. It abounds more and more, in proportion as we advance farther from the equator, and becomes not only more frequent but more inflammable in northern latitudes.‡

*Extent of surface covered by peat.* — There is a vast extent of surface in Europe covered with peat, which, in Ireland, is said to extend over a tenth of the whole island. One of the mosses on the Shannon is described by Dr. Boate to be fifty miles long, by two or three broad; and the great marsh of Montoire, near the mouth of the Loire, is mentioned, by Blavier, as being more than fifty leagues in circumference. It is a curious and well-ascertained fact, that many of these mosses of the north of Europe occupy the place of forests of pine and oak, which have, many of them, disappeared within the historical era. Such changes are brought about by the fall of trees and the stagnation of water, caused by their trunks and branches obstructing the free drainage of the atmospheric waters, and giving rise to a marsh. In a warm climate, such decayed timber would immediately be removed by insects, or by putrefaction; but, in the cold temperature now prevailing in our latitudes, many examples are recorded of marshes originating in this source. Thus, in Mar forest, in Aberdeenshire, large trunks of Scotch fir, which had fallen from age and decay, were soon immured in peat, formed partly out of their perishing leaves and branches, and in part from the growth of other plants. We also learn, that the overthrow of a forest by a storm, about the middle of the seventeenth century, gave rise to a peat moss near Lochbroom, in Ross-shire, where, in less than half a century after the fall of the trees, the inhabitants dug peat.* Dr. Walker mentions a similar change, when, in the year 1756, the whole wood of Drumlanrig in Dumfries-shire, was overset by the wind. Such events explain the occurrence, both in Britain and on the Continent, of mosses where the trees are all broken within two or three feet of the original surface, and where their trunks all lie in the same direction.†

---

* Irish Bog Reports, p. 209.

† System of Geology, vol. ii. p. 353.

‡ Rev. Dr. Rennie on Peat, p. 260.

Nothing is more common than the occurrence of buried trees at the bottom of the Irish peat-mosses, as also in most of those of England, France, and Holland; and they have been so often observed with parts of their trunks standing erect, and with their roots fixed to the sub-soil, that no doubt can be entertained of their having generally grown on the spot. They consist, for the most part, of the fir, the oak, and the birch: where the sub-soil is clay, the remains of oak are the most abundant; where sand is the substratum, fir prevails. In the marsh of Curragh, in the Isle of Man, vast trees are discovered standing firm on their roots, though at the depth of eighteen or twenty feet below the surface. Some naturalists have desired to refer the imbedding of timber in peat-mosses to aqueous transportation, since rivers are well known to float wood into lakes; but the facts above mentioned show that, in numerous instances, such an hypothesis is inadmissible. It has, moreover, been observed, that in Scotland, as also in many parts of the Continent, the largest trees are found in those peat-mosses which lie in the least elevated regions, and that the trees are proportionally smaller in those which lie at higher levels; from which fact De Luc and Walker have both inferred, that the trees grew on the spot, for they would naturally attain a greater size in lower and warmer levels. The leaves also, and fruits of each species, are continually found immersed in the moss along with the parent trees; as, for example, the leaves and acorns of the oak, the cones and leaves of the fir, and the nuts of the hazel.

---

* Dr. Rennie's Essays, p. 65.

† Ibid., p. 30.

*Recent origin of some peat-mosses.*—In Hatfield moss, which appears clearly to have been a forest eighteen hundred years ago, fir-trees have been found ninety feet long, and sold for masts and keels of ships; oaks have also been discovered there above one hundred feet long. The dimensions of an oak from this moss are given in the Philosophical Transactions, No. 275., which must have been larger than any tree now existing in the British dominions.

In the same moss of Hatfield, as well as in that of Kincardine, and several others, Roman roads have been found covered to the depth of eight feet by peat. All the coins, axes, arms, and other utensils found in British and French mosses, are also Roman; so that a considerable portion of the European peat-bogs are evidently not more ancient than the age of Julius Cæsar. Nor can any vestiges of the ancient forests described by that general, along the line of the great Roman way in Britain, be discovered, except in the ruined trunks of trees in peat.

De Luc ascertained that the very site of the aboriginal forests of Hircinia, Semana, Ardennes, and several others, are now occupied by mosses and fens; and a great part of these changes have, with much probability, been attributed to the strict orders given by Severus, and other emperors, to destroy all the wood in the conquered provinces. Several of the British forests, however, which are now mosses, were cut at different periods, by order of the English parliament, because they harboured wolves or outlaws. Thus the Welsh woods were cut and burnt, in the reign of Edward I.; as were many of those in Ireland, by Henry II., to prevent the natives from harbouring in them, and harassing his troops.

It is curious to reflect that considerable tracts have, by these accidents, been permanently sterilized, and that during a period when civilization has been making great progress, large areas in Europe have, by human agency, been rendered less capable of administering to the wants of man. Rennie observes, with truth, that in those regions alone which the Roman eagle never reached—in the remote circles of the German empire, in Poland and Prussia, and still more in Norway, Sweden, and the vast empire of Russia—can we see what Europe was before it yielded to the power of Rome.* Desolation now reigns where stately forests of pine and oak once flourished, such as might now have supplied all the navies of Europe with timber.

*Sources of bog iron-ore.*—At the bottom of peat-mosses there is sometimes found a cake, or "pan," as it is termed, of oxide of iron, and the frequency of bog iron-ore is familiar to the mineralogist. The oak, which is so often found dyed black in peat, owes its colour to the same metal. From what source the iron is derived is by no means obvious, since we cannot in all cases suppose that it has been precipitated from the waters of mineral springs. According to Fourcroy there is iron in all compact wood, and it is the cause of one-twelfth part of the weight of oak. The heaths (*Ericæ*) which flourish in a sandy ferruginous soil, are said to contain more iron than any other vegetable.

It has been suggested that iron, being soluble in acids, may be diffused through the whole mass of vegetables, when they decay in a bog, and may, by its superior specific gravity, sink to the bottom, and be there precipitated, so as to form bog iron-ore; or where there is a sub-soil of sand or gravel, it may cement them into ironstone or ferruginous conglomerate.†

*Preservation of animal substances in peat.*—One interesting circumstance attending the history of peat-mosses is the high state of preservation of animal substances buried in them for periods of many years. In June, 1747, the body of a woman was found six feet deep, in a peat-moor in the Isle of Axholm, in Lincolnshire. The antique sandals on her feet afforded evidence of her having been buried there for many ages; yet her nails, hair, and skin, are described as having shown hardly any marks of decay. On the estate of the Earl of Moira, in Ireland, a human body was dug up, a foot deep in gravel, covered with eleven feet of moss; the body was completely clothed, and the garments seemed all to be made of hair. Before the use of wool was known in that country, the clothing of the inhabitants was made of hair, so that it would appear that this body had been buried at that early period; yet it was fresh and unimpared.* In the Philosophical Transactions, we find an example recorded of the bodies of two persons having been buried in moist peat, in Derbyshire, in 1674, about a yard deep, which were examined twenty-eight years and nine months afterwards; "the colour of their skin was fair and natural, their flesh soft as that of persons newly dead."†

---

* Essays, &c., p. 74.

† Ibid., p. 347.

Among other analogous facts we may mention, that in digging a pit for a well near Dulverton, in Somersetshire, many pigs were found in various postures, still entire. Their shape was well preserved, the skin, which retained the hair, having assumed a dry, membranous appearance. Their whole substance was converted into a white, friable, laminated, inodorous and tasteless substance; but which, when exposed to heat, emitted an odour precisely similar to broiled bacon.*

---

* Dr. Rennie, Essays, &c., p. 521., where several other instances are referred to.

† Phil. Trans., vol. xxxviii., 1734.

*Cause of the antiseptic property of peat.*—We naturally ask whence peat derives this antiseptic property? It has been attributed by some to the carbonic and gallic acids which issue from decayed wood, as also to the presence of charred wood in the lowest strata of many peat-mosses, for charcoal is a powerful antiseptic, and capable of purifying water already putrid. Vegetable gums and resins also may operate in the same way.†

The tannin occasionally present in peat is the produce, says Dr. Macculloch, of tormentilla, and some other plants; but the quantity he thinks too small, and its occurrence too casual, to give rise to effects of any importance. He hints that the soft parts of animal bodies, preserved in peat-bogs, may have been converted into adipocire by the action of water merely; an explanation which appears clearly applicable to some of the cases above enumerated.‡

*Miring of quadrupeds.*—The manner, however, in which peat contributes to preserve, for indefinite periods, the harder parts of terrestrial animals, is a subject of more immediate interest to the geologist. There are two ways in which animals become occasionally buried in the peat of marshy grounds; they either sink down into the semifluid mud, underlying a turfy surface, upon which they have rashly ventured, or, at other times, a bog "bursts," in the manner before described, and animals may be involved in the peaty alluvium.*

---

* Dr. Rennie, Essays, &c., p. 521. † Ibid., p. 531.

‡ Syst. of Geol., vol. ii. pp. 340—346.

In the extensive bogs of Newfoundland cattle are sometimes found buried with their heads only and neck above ground; and after having remained for days in this situation, they have been drawn out by ropes and saved. In Scotland, also, cattle venturing on the "quaking moss" are often mired, or "laired," as it is termed; and in Ireland, Mr. King asserts that the number of cattle which are lost in sloughs is quite incredible.†

*Solway moss.* — The description given of the Solway moss will serve to illustrate the general character of these boggy grounds. That moss, observes Gilpin, is a flat area, about seven miles in circumference, situated on the confines of England and Scotland. Its surface is covered with grass and rushes, presenting a dry crust and a fair appearance; but it shakes under the least pressure, the bottom being unsound and semifluid. The adventurous passenger, therefore, who sometimes in dry seasons traverses this perilous waste, to save a few miles, picks his cautious way over the rushy tussocks as they appear before him, for here the soil is firmest. If his foot slip, or if he venture to desert this mark of security, it is possible he may never more be heard of.

"At the battle of Solway, in the time of Henry VIII. (1542), when the Scotch army, commanded by Oliver Sinclair, was routed, an unfortunate troop of horse, driven by their fears, plunged into this morass, which instantly closed upon them. The tale was traditional, but it is now authenticated; a man and horse, in complete armour, having been found by peat-diggers, in the place where it was always supposed the affair had happened. The skeleton of each was well preserved, and the different parts of the armour easily distinguished."*

---

* See above, p. 182.

† Phil. Trans., vol. xv. p. 949.

This same moss, on the 16th of December, 1772, having been filled with water during heavy rains, rose to an unusual height, and then burst. A stream of black half-consolidated mud began at first to creep over the plain, resembling, in the rate of its progress, an ordinary lava current. No lives were lost, but the deluge totally overwhelmed some cottages, and covered 400 acres. The highest parts of the original moss subsided to the depth of about twenty-five feet; and the height of the moss, on the lowest parts of the country which it invaded, was at least fifteen feet.

*Bursting of a peat-moss in Ireland.*— A recent inundation in Sligo (January, 1831) affords another example of this phenomenon. After a sudden thaw of snow the bog between Bloomfield and Geevah gave way; and a black deluge, carrying with it the contents of a hundred acres of bog, took the direction of a small stream, and rolled on with the violence of a torrent, sweeping along heath, timber, mud, and stones, and overwhelming many meadows and arable land. On passing through some boggy land, the flood swept out a wide and deep ravine, and part of the road leading from Bloomfield to St. James's Well was completely carried away from below the foundation for the breadth of 200 yards.

*Bones of herbivorous quadrupeds in peat.*—The antlers of large and full-grown stags are amongst the most common and conspicuous remains of animals in peat. They are not horns which have been shed; for portions of the skull are found attached, proving that the whole animal perished. Bones of the ox, hog, horse, sheep, and other herbivorous animals, also, occur; and in Ireland and the Isle of Man skeletons of a gigantic elk. M. Morren has discovered in the peat of Flanders, the bones of otters and beavers *; but no remains have been met with belonging to those extinct quadrupeds of which the living congeners inhabit warmer latitudes, such as the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, hyæna, and tiger, though these are so common in superficial deposits of silt, mud, sand, or stalactite, in various districts throughout Great Britain. Their absence seems to imply that they had ceased to live before the atmosphere of this part of the world acquired that cold and humid character which favours the growth of peat.

---

* Observations on Picturesque Beauty, &c., 1772.

*Remains of ships, &c., in peat-mosses.* — From the facts before mentioned, that mosses occasionally burst, and descend in a fluid state to lower levels, it will readily be seen that lakes and arms of the sea may occasionally become the receptacles of drift-peat. Of this, accordingly, there are numerous examples; and hence the alternations of clay and sand with different deposits of peat so frequent on some coasts, as on those of the Baltic and German Ocean. We are informed by Deguer that remains of ships, nautical instruments, and oars, have been found in many of the Dutch mosses; and Gerard, in his History of the Valley of the Somme, mentions that in the lowest tier of that moss was found a boat loaded with bricks, proving that these mosses were at one period navigable lakes and arms of the sea, as were also many mosses on the coast of Picardy, Zealand, and Friesland, from which soda and salt are procured.* The canoes, stone hatchets, and stone arrow-heads, found in peat in different parts of Great Britain, lead to similar conclusions.

---

* Bulletin de la Soc. Géol. de France, tom. ii. p. 26.

### *Imbedding of Human and other Remains and Works of Art in Blown Sand.*

The drifting of sand may next be considered among the causes capable of preserving organic remains and works of art on the emerged land.

*African sands.*—The sands of the African deserts have been driven by the west winds over all the lands capable of tillage on the western banks of the Nile, except such as are sheltered by mountains.† And thus the ruins of ancient cities have been buried between the Temple of Jupiter Ammon and Nubia. M. G. A. de Luc attempted to infer the recent origin of our continents, from the fact that these moving sands have arrived only in modern times at the fertile plains of the Nile. The same scourge, he said, would have afflicted Egypt for ages anterior to the times of history, had the continents risen above the level of the sea several hundred centuries before our era.‡ But the author proceeded in this, as in all his other chronological computations, on a multitude of gratuitous assumptions. He ought, in the first place, to have demonstrated that the whole continent of Africa was raised above the level of the sea at one period;

---

* Dr. Rennie, Essays on Peat-Moss, p. 205.

† M. G. A. de Luc, Mercure de France, Sept. 1809. ‡ Ibid.

for unless this point was established, the region from whence the sands began to move might have been the last addition made to Africa, and the commencement of the sand flood might have been long posterior to the laying dry of the greater portion of that continent. That the different parts of Europe were not all elevated at one time is now generally admitted. De Luc should also have pointed out the depth of drift sand in various parts of the great Libyan deserts, and have shown whether any valleys of large dimensions had been filled up — how long these may have arrested the progress of the sands, and how far the flood had upon the whole advanced since the times of history.

No mode of interment can be conceived more favourable to the conservation of monuments for indefinite periods than that now so common in the region immediately westward of the Nile. The sand which surrounded and filled the great temple of Ipsambul, first discovered by Burckhardt, and afterwards partially uncovered by Belzoni and Beechey, was so fine as to resemble a fluid when put in motion. Neither the features of the colossal figures, nor the colour of the stucco with which some were covered, nor the paintings on the walls, had received any injury from being enveloped for ages in this dry impalpable dust.*

At some future period, perhaps, when the pyramids shall have perished, the action of the sea, or an earthquake, may lay open to the day some of these buried temples. Or we may suppose the desert to remain undisturbed, and changes in the surrounding sea and land to modify the climate and the direction of the prevailing winds, so that these may then waft away the Libyan sands as gradually as they once brought them to those regions. Thus, many a town and temple of higher antiquity than Thebes or Memphis may re-appear in their original integrity, and a part of the gloom which overhangs the history of the earlier nations be dispelled.

---

* Stratton, Ed. Phil. Journ., No. V. p. 62.

Whole caravans are said to have been overwhelmed by the Libyan sands; and Burckhardt informs us that "after passing the Akaba, near the head of the Red Sea, the bones of dead camels are the only guides of the pilgrim through the wastes of sand." — "We did not see," says Captain Lyon, speaking of a plain near the Soudah mountains, in Northern Africa, "the least appearance of vegetation; but observed many skeletons of animals, which had died of fatigue on the desert, and occasionally the grave of some human being. All these bodies were so dried by the heat of the sun, that putrefaction appears not to have taken place after death. In recently expired animals I could not perceive the slightest offensive smell; and in those long dead, the skin with the hair on it remained unbroken and perfect, although so brittle as to break with a slight blow. The sand-winds never cause these carcasses to change their places; for, in a short time, a slight mound is formed round them, and they become stationary."*

*Towns overwhelmed by sand floods.* — The burying of several towns and villages in England and France by blown sand is on record; thus, for example, near

---

* Travels in North Africa in the Years 1818, 1819, and 1820, p. 83.

St. Pol de Leon, in Brittany, a whole village was completely buried beneath drift sand, so that nothing was seen but the spire of the church. *

In Suffolk, in the year 1688, part of Downham was overwhelmed by sands which had broken loose about 100 years before, from a warren five miles to the south-west. This sand had, in the course of a century, travelled five miles, and covered more than 1000 acres of land.† A considerable tract of cultivated land on the north coast of Cornwall has been inundated by drift sand, forming hills several hundred feet above the level of the sea, and composed of comminuted marine shells, in which some terrestrial shells are inclosed entire. By the shifting of these sands the ruins of ancient buildings have been discovered; and in some cases where wells have been bored to a great depth, distinct strata, separated by a vegetable crust, are visible. In some places, as at New Quay, large masses have become sufficiently indurated to be used for architectural purposes. The lapidification, which is still in progress, appears to be due to oxide of iron held in solution by the water which percolates the sand.‡

## *Imbedding of Organic and other Remains in Volcanic Formations on the Land.*

I have in some degree anticipated the subject of this section in a former volume, when speaking of the buried cities around Naples, and those on the flanks of

---

* Mém. de l'Acad. des Sci. de Paris, 1772. — Malte-Brun's Geol. vol. i. p. 425.

† Phil. Trans., vol. ii. p. 722.

‡ Boase on Submersion of Part of the Mount's Bay, &c., Trans. Roy. Geol. Soc. of Cornwall, vol. ii. p. 140.

Etna.* From the facts referred to, it appeared that the preservation of human remains and works of art is frequently due to the descent of floods caused by the copious rains which accompany eruptions. These aqueous lavas, as they are called in Campania, flow with great rapidity; and in 1822 surprised and suffocated, as was stated, seven persons in the villages of St. Sebastian and Massa, on the flanks of Vesuvius.

In the tuffs, moreover, or solidified mud, deposited by these aqueous lavas, impressions of leaves and of trees have been observed. Some of those, formed after the eruption of Vesuvius in 1822, are now preserved in the museum at Naples.

Lava itself may become indirectly the means of preserving terrestrial remains, by overflowing beds of ashes, pumice, and ejected matter, which may have been showered down upon animals and plants, or upon human remains. Few substances are better non-conductors of heat than volcanic dust and scoriæ, so that a bed of such materials is rarely melted by a superimposed lava current. After consolidation, the lava affords secure protection to the lighter and more removeable mass below, in which the organic relics may be enveloped. The Herculanean tuffs containing the rolls of Papyrus, of which the characters are still legible, have, as was before remarked, been for ages covered by lava.

Another mode by which lava may tend to the conservation of imbedded remains, at least of works of human art, is by its overflowing them when it is not intensely heated, in which case they sometimes suffer little or no injury.

---

* Vol. II. pp. 147—172.

Thus when the Etnean lava-current of 1669 covered fourteen towns and villages, and part of the city of Catania, it did not melt down a great number of statues and other articles in the vaults of Catania; and at the depth of thirty-five feet in the same current, on the site of Mompiliere, one of the buried towns, the bell of a church and some statues were found uninjured.*

There are several buried cities in Central India, which might probably yield a richer harvest to the antiquary than Pompeii and Herculaneum.† The city of Oujein (or Oojain) was, about fifty years before the Christian era, the seat of empire, of art, and of learning; but in the time of the Rajah Vicramaditya, it was overwhelmed, together, as tradition reports, with more than eighty other large towns in the provinces of Malwa and Bagur, "by a shower of earth." The city which now bears the name is situated a mile to the southward of the ancient town. On digging on the spot where the latter is supposed to have stood, to the depth of fifteen or eighteen feet, there are frequently discovered, says Mr. Hunter, entire brick walls, pillars of stone, and pieces of wood of an extraordinary hardness, besides utensils of various kinds, and ancient coins. Many coins are also found in the channels cut by the periodical rains, or in the beds of torrents into which they have been washed. "During our stay at Oujein, a large quantity of wheat was found by a man digging for bricks. It was, as might have been expected, almost entirely consumed, and in a state resembling charcoal. In a ravine cut by the rains, from which several stone pillars had been dug, I saw a space from twelve to fifteen feet long and seven or eight high, composed of earthen vessels, broken and closely compacted together. It was conjectured, with great appearance of probability, to have been a potter's kiln. Between this place and the new town is a hollow, in which, tradition says, the river Sipparah formerly ran. It changed its course at the time the city was buried, and now runs to the westward." *

---

* Vol. II. p. 172.

† Vol. II. p. 147.

The soil which covers Oujein is described as "being of an ash-grey colour, with minute specks of black sand." †

That the "shower of earth" which is reported to have "fallen from heaven" was produced by a volcanic eruption, seems very probable, although no information has been obtained respecting the site of the vent; and the nearest volcano of which we read is that which was in eruption during the Cutch earthquake in 1819, at the distance of about thirty miles from Bhooj, the capital of Cutch, and at least 300 geographical miles from Oujein.

Captain F. Dangerfield, who accompanied Sir John Malcolm in his late expedition into Central India, states that the river Nerbuddah, in Malwa, has its channel excavated through *columnar basalt*, above which are beds of *marl* impregnated with salt. The upper of these marls is of a light colour, and from thirty to forty feet thick, and rests horizontally on the lower bed, which is of a reddish colour. Both appear from the description to be tuffs composed of the materials of volcanic ejections, and forming a covering from sixty to seventy feet deep overlying the basalt, which seems to resemble some of the currents of prismatic lava in Auvergne and the Vivarais. Near the middle of this tufaceous mass, and therefore at the depth of thirty feet or more from the surface, just where the two beds of tuff meet, Captain Dangerfield was shown, near the city of Mhysir, buried bricks and large earthen vessels, said to have belonged to the ancient city of Mhysir, destroyed by the catastrophe of Oujein.*

---

* Narrative of Journey from Agra to Oujein, Asiatic Researches, vol. vi. p. 36.

† Asiatic Journal, vol. ix. p. 35.

---

* Sir J. Malcolm's Cent. Ind. — Geol. of Malwa, by Captain F. Dangerfield, App. No. ii. pp. 324, 325.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## BURYING OF FOSSILS IN ALLUVIAL DEPOSITS AND IN CAVES.

Alluvium defined — Effects of sudden inundations — Terrestrial animals most abundantly preserved in alluvium where earthquakes prevail — Marine alluvium — Buried town — Effects of landslips — Organic remains in fissures and caves — Form and dimensions of caverns — their probable origin — Closed basins and engulphed rivers of the Morea (p. 225.) — Katavothra — Formation of breccias with red cement — Human remains imbedded in Morea — Intermixture in caves of south of France and elsewhere of human remains and bones of extinct quadrupeds no proof of former co-existence of man with those lost species (p. 235.).

*Alluvium.* — The next subject for our consideration, according to the division before proposed, is the imbedding of organic bodies in alluvium, by which I mean such transported matter as has been thrown down, whether by rivers, floods, or other causes, upon land not *permanently* submerged beneath the waters of lakes or seas, — I say *permanently submerged*, in order to distinguish between *alluviums* and regular subaqueous deposits. These regular strata are accumulated in lakes or great submarine receptacles; but the alluviums in the channels of rivers and currents, where the materials may be regarded as still *in transitu*, or on their way to a place of rest. There may be cases where it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation between these two classes of formations, but these exceptions are rare; and the division is, upon the whole, convenient and natural.

The alluvium of the bed of a river does not often contain any animal or vegetable remains; for the whole mass is so continually shifting its place, and the attrition of the various parts is so great, that even the hardest rocks contained in it are, at length, ground down to powder. But when sand, mud, and rubbish, are suddenly swept by a flood, and then let fall upon the land, such an alluvium may envelop trees or the remains of animals, which, in this manner, are often permanently preserved. In the mud and sand produced by the floods in Scotland, in 1829, the dead and mutilated bodies of hares, rabbits, moles, mice, partridges, and even the bodies of men, were found partially buried.* But in these and similar cases one flood usually effaces the memorials left by another, and there is rarely a sufficient depth of undisturbed transported matter, in any one spot, to preserve the organic remains for ages from destruction.

Where earthquakes prevail, and the levels of a country are changed from time to time, the remains of animals may more easily be inhumed and protected from disintegration. Portions of plains, loaded with alluvial accumulations by transient floods, may be gradually upraised; and, if any organic remains have been imbedded in the transported materials, they may, after such elevation, be placed beyond the reach of the erosive power of streams. In districts where the drainage is repeatedly deranged by subterranean movements, every fissure, every hollow caused by the sinking in of land, becomes a depository of organic and inorganic substances, hurried along by transient floods.

---

* Sir T. D. Lauder, Bart., on the great Floods in Morayshire Aug. 1829, p. 177.

*Marine alluvium.* — The term "marine alluvium" is, perhaps, admissible, if confined to banks of shingle thrown up like the Chesil bank in Dorsetshire, or to materials cast up by a wave of the sea upon the land, or those which a submarine current has left in its track. The kind last mentioned must necessarily, when the bed of the ocean is laid dry, resemble terrestrial alluviums; with this difference, that if any fragments of organic bodies have escaped destruction they will belong principally to marine species.

In May, 1787, a dreadful inundation of the sea was caused, at Coringa, Ingeram, and other places, on the coast of Coromandel, in the East Indies, by a hurricane blowing from the N. E., which raised the waters so that they rolled inland to the distance of about twenty miles from the shore, swept away many villages, drowned more than 10,000 people, and left the country covered with marine mud, on which the carcasses of about 100,000 head of cattle were strewed. An old tradition of the natives of a similar flood, said to have happened about a century before, was till this event, regarded as fabulous by the European settlers.* The same coast of Coromandel was, so late as May, 1832, the scene of another catastrophe of the same kind; and when the inundation subsided, several vessels were seen grounded in the fields of the low country about Coringa.

Many of the storms termed hurricanes have evidently been connected with submarine earthquakes, as is shown by the atmospheric phenomena attendant on them, and by the sounds heard in the ground, and the odours emitted. Such were the circumstances which accompanied the swell of the sea in Jamaica, in 1780, when a great wave desolated the western coast, and, bursting upon Savanna la Mar, swept away the whole town in an instant, so that not a vestige of man, beast, or habitation, was seen upon the surface.*

---

* Dodsley's Ann. Regist., 1788.

*Houses and works of art in alluvial deposits.* — A very ancient subterranean town, apparently of Hindoo origin, was discovered in India in 1833, in digging the Doab canal. Its site is north of Saharunpore, near the town of Behat, and 17 feet below the present surface of the country. More than 170 coins of silver and copper have already been found, and many articles in metal and earthenware. The overlying deposit consisted of about 5 feet of river sand, with a substratum about 12 feet thick, of red alluvial clay. In the neighbourhood are several rivers and torrents, which descend from the mountains charged with vast quantities of mud, sand, and shingle; and within the memory of persons now living the modern Behat has been threatened by an inundation, which after retreating left the neighbouring country strewed over with a superficial covering of sand several feet thick. In sinking wells in the environs, masses of shingle and boulders have been reached resembling those now in the river-channels of the same district, under a deposit of 30 feet of reddish loam. Captain Cautley, therefore, who directed the excavations, supposes that the matter discharged by torrents has gradually raised the whole country skirting the base of the lower hills; and that the ancient town having been originally built in a hollow, was submerged by floods, and covered over with sediment 17 feet in thickness.*

---

* Edwards, Hist. of West Indies, vol. i. p. 235. ed. 1801.

We are informed, by M. Boblaye, that in the Morea, the formation termed céramique, consisting of pottery, tiles, and bricks, intermixed with various works of art, enters so largely into the alluvium and vegetable soil upon the plains of Greece, and into hard and crystalline breccias which have been formed at the foot of declivities, that it constitutes an important stratum which might, in the absence of zoological characters, serve to mark our epoch in a most indestructible manner.†

*Landslips.* — The landslip, by suddenly precipitating large masses of rock and soil into a valley, overwhelms a multitude of animals, and sometimes buries permanently whole villages, with their inhabitants and large herds of cattle. Thus three villages, with their entire population, were covered, when the mountain of Piz fell in 1772, in the district of Treviso, in the state of Venice ‡; and part of Mount Grenier, south of Chambery, in Savoy, which fell down in the year 1248, buried five parishes, including the town and church of St. André, the ruins occupying an extent of about nine square miles. §

The number of lives lost by the slide of the Rossberg, in Switzerland, in 1806, was estimated at more than 800, a great number of the bodies, as well as several villages and scattered houses, being buried deep under mud and rock. In the same country, several hundred cottages, with eighteen of their inhabitants and a great number of cows, goats, and sheep, were victims to the sudden fall of a bed of stones, thirty yards deep, which descended from the summits of the Diablerets. In the year 1618, a portion of Mount Conto fell, in the county of Chiavenna in Switzerland, and buried the town of Pleurs with all its inhabitants, to the number of 2430.

---

* Journ. of Asiat. Soc., Nos. xxv. and xxix.—1834.

† Ann. des Sci. Nat., tome xxii. p. 117. Feb. 1831.

‡ Malte-Brun's Geog., vol. i. p. 435.

§ Bakewell, Travels in the Tarentaise, vol. i. p. 201.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples of similar local catastrophes, which, however numerous they may have been in mountainous parts of Europe, within the historical period, have been, nevertheless, of rare occurrence when compared to events of the same kind which have taken place in regions convulsed by earthquakes. It is then that enormous masses of rock and earth, even in comparatively low and level countries, are detached from the sides of valleys, and cast down into the river-courses, and often so unexpectedly that they overwhelm, even in the daytime, every living thing upon the plains.

### *Preservation of Organic Remains in Fissures and Caves.*

In the history of earthquakes it was shown that many hundreds of new fissures and chasms had opened in certain regions during the last 150 years, some of which are described as being of unfathomable depth. We also perceive that mountain masses have been violently fractured and dislocated, during their rise above the level of the sea; and thus we may account for the existence of many cavities in the interior of the earth by the simple agency of earthquakes; but there are some caverns, especially in limestone rocks, which, although usually, if not always, connected with rents, are nevertheless of such forms and dimensions, alternately expanding into spacious chambers, and then contracting again into narrow passages, that it is difficult to conceive that they can owe their origin to the mere fracturing and displacement of solid masses.

In the limestone of Kentucky, in the basin of Green River, one of the tributaries of the Ohio, a line of underground cavities has been traced in one direction for a distance of ten miles, without any termination; and one of the chambers, of which there are many, all connected by narrow tunnels, is no less than ten acres in area, and 150 feet in its greatest height. Besides the principal series of "antres vast," there are a great many lateral embranchments not yet explored.*

The cavernous structure here alluded to is not altogether confined to calcareous rocks; for it has lately been observed in micaceous and argillaceous schist, in the Grecian island of Thermia (Cythnos of the ancients), one of the Cyclades. Here also spacious halls, with rounded and irregular walls, are connected together by narrow passages or tunnels, and there are many lateral branches which have no outlet. A current of water has evidently at some period flowed through the whole, and left a muddy deposit of bluish clay upon the floor; but the erosive action of the stream cannot be supposed to have given rise to the excavations in the first instance. M. Virlet suggests that fissures were first caused by earthquakes, and that these fissures became the chimneys or vents for the disengagement of gas, generated below by volcanic heat. Gases, he observes, such as the muriatic, sulphuric, fluoric, and others, might, if raised to a high temperature, alter and decompose the rocks which they traverse. There are signs of the former action of such vapours in rents of the micaceous schist of Thermia, and thermal springs now issue from the grottos of that island. We may suppose that afterwards the elements of the decomposed rocks were gradually removed in a state of solution by mineral waters; a theory which, according to M. Virlet, is confirmed by the effect of heated gases which escape from rents in the isthmus of Corinth, and which have greatly altered and corroded the hard siliceous and jaspidious rocks.*

---

* Mem. by Nahum Ward, Trans. of Antiq. Soc. of Massachusetts. Holmes's Un. States, p. 438.

When we reflect on the quantity of carbonate of lime annually poured out by mineral waters, we are prepared to admit that large cavities must, in the course of ages, be formed at considerable depths below the surface in calcareous rocks.† These rocks, it will be remembered, are at once more soluble, more permeable, and more fragile, than any others, at least all the compact varieties are very easily broken by the movements of earthquakes, which would produce only flexures in argillaceous strata. Fissures once formed in limestone are not liable, as in many other formations, to become closed up by impervious clayey matter, and hence a stream of acidulous water might for ages obtain a free and unobstructed passage.‡

*Morea.*— After these observations on the possible origin of some subterranean hollows, I shall next consider in what manner they may be filled up with mud, pebbles, and other substances. When a mass of cavernous rock is raised above the level of the sea, it will usually be intersected by ravines and valleys, and it must then happen that here and there a torrent or river will break into some cavern. Accordingly, engulphed streams occur in almost every region of cavernous limestone, as in the north of England, for example; but in no district are they more conspicuous than in the Morea, where the phenomena attending them have been lately studied and described in great detail by M. Boblaye and his fellow-labourers of the French expedition to Greece.* From his account it appears that numerous caverns are there found in a compact limestone, of the age of the English chalk, immediately below which are arenaceous strata referred to the period of our green sand. In the more elevated districts of that peninsula there are many deep land-locked valleys, or basins, closed round on all sides by mountains of fissured and cavernous limestone. The year is divided almost as distinctly as between the tropics into a rainy season, which lasts upwards of four months, and a season of drought, of nearly eight months' duration. When the torrents are swollen by the rains, they rush from surrounding heights into the inclosed basins; but, instead of giving rise to lakes, as would be the case in most other countries, they are received into gulphs or chasms, called by the Greeks "Katavothra," and which correspond to what are termed "swallow-holes" in the north of England. The water of these torrents is charged with pebbles and red ochreous earth, resembling precisely the well-known cement of the osseous breccias of the Mediterranean. It dissolves in acids with effervescence, and leaves a residue of hydrated oxide of iron, granular iron, impalpable grains of silex, and small crystals of quartz. Soil of the same description abounds every where on the surface of the decomposing limestone in Greece, that rock containing in it much siliceous and ferruginous matter.

---

* Bull. de la Soc. Géol. de France tom. ii. p. 329.

† See Vol. I. p. 307.

‡ See some remarks by M. Boblaye, Ann. des Mines, 3me série, tom. iv.

---

* See Ann. des Mines, 3me série, tom. iv. 1833.

Many of the Katavothra being insufficient to give passage to all the water in the rainy season, a temporary lake is formed round the mouth of the chasm, which then becomes still farther obstructed by pebbles, sand, and red mud, thrown down from the turbid waters. The lake being thus raised, its waters generally escape through other openings, at higher levels, around the borders of the plain, constituting the bottom of the closed basin.

In some places, as at Kavaros and Tripolitza, where the principal discharge is by a gulph in the middle of the plain, nothing can be seen over the opening in summer, when the lake dries up, but a deposit of red mud, cracked in all directions. But the Katavothron is more commonly situated at the foot of the surrounding escarpment of limestone; and in that case there is sometimes room enough to allow a person to enter, in summer, and even to penetrate far into the interior. Within is seen a suite of chambers, communicating with each other by narrow passages; and M. Virlet relates, that in one instance he observed, near the entrance, human bones imbedded in recent red mud, mingled with the remains of plants and animals of species now inhabiting the Morea. It is not wonderful, he says, that the bones of man should be met with in such receptacles; for so murderous have been the late wars in Greece, that skeletons are often seen lying exposed on the surface of the country.*

In summer, when no water is flowing into the Katavothron, its mouth, half closed up with red mud, is masked by a vigorous vegetation, which is cherished by the moisture of the place. It is then the favourite hiding-place and den of foxes and jackals; so that the same cavity serves at one season of the year for the habitation of carnivorous beasts, and at another as the channel of an engulphed river. Near the mouth of one chasm, M. Boblaye and his companions saw the carcass of a horse, in part devoured, the size of which seemed to have prevented the jackals from dragging it in: the marks of their teeth were observed on the bones, and it was evident that the floods of the ensuing winter would wash in whatsoever might remain of the skeleton.

It has been stated that the waters of all these torrents of the Morea are turbid where they are engulphed; but when they come out again, often at the distance of many leagues, they are perfectly clear and limpid, being only charged occasionally with a slight quantity of calcareous sand. The points of efflux are usually near the sea-shores of the Morea, but sometimes they are submarine; and when this is the case, the sands are seen to boil up for a considerable space, and the surface of the sea, in calm weather, swells in large convex waves. It is curious to reflect, that when this discharge fails in seasons of drought, the sea may break into subterraneous caverns, and carry in marine sand and shells, to be mingled with ossiferous mud, and the remains of terrestrial animals.

---

* Bull. de la Soc. Géol. de France, tom. iii. p. 223.

In general, however, the efflux of water at these inferior openings is surprisingly uniform. It seems, therefore, that the large caverns in the interior must serve as reservoirs, and that the water escapes gradually from them, in consequence of the smallness of the rents and passages by which they communicate with the surface.

The phenomena above described are not confined to the Morea, but occur in Greece generally, and in those parts of Italy, Spain, Asia Minor, and Syria, where the formations of the Morea extend. When speaking of the numerous fissures in the limestone of Greece, M. Boblaye reminds us of the famous earthquake of 469 B. C., when, as we learn from Cicero, Plutarch, Strabo, and Pliny, Sparta was laid in ruins, part of the summit of Mount Taygetus torn off, and numerous gulphs and fissures caused in the rocks of Laconia.

During the great earthquake of 1693, in Sicily, several thousand people were at once entombed in the ruins of caverns in limestone, at Sortino Vecchio; and, at the same time, a large stream, which had issued for ages from one of the grottos below that town, changed suddenly its subterranean course, and came out from the mouth of a cave lower down the valley, where no water had previously flowed. To this new point the ancient water-mills were transferred.*

When the courses of engulphed rivers are thus liable to change, from time to time, by alterations in the levels of a country, and by the rending and shattering of mountain masses, we must suppose that the dens of wild beasts will sometimes be inundated by subterranean floods, and their carcasses buried under heaps of alluvium. The bones, moreover, of individuals which have died in the recesses of caves, or of animals which have been carried in for prey, may be drifted along, and mixed up with mud, sand, and fragments of rocks, so as to form osseous breccias.

---

* I learnt this from some inhabitants of Sortino, in 1829, and visited the points alluded to.

But it is not merely in spots where streams are engulphed that the bones of animals may be collected in rents and caverns, for open fissures often serve as natural pit-falls in which herbivorous animals perish. This may happen the more readily when they are chased by beasts of prey, or when surprised while carelessly browsing on the shrubs which so often overgrow and conceal the edges of fissures.*

During the excavations recently made near Behat in India, the bones of two deer were found at the bottom of an ancient well which had been filled up with alluvial loam. Their horns were broken to pieces, but the jaw bones and other parts of the skeleton remained tolerably perfect. "Their presence," says Capt. Cautley, "is easily accounted for, as a great number of these and other animals are constantly lost in galloping over the jungles and among the high grass by falling into deserted wells." †

Above the village of Selside, near Ingleborough in Yorkshire, a chasm of enormous but unknown depth occurs in the scar-limestone, a member of the carboniferous series. "The chasm," says Professor Sedgwick, "is surrounded by grassy shelving banks, and many animals, tempted towards its brink, have fallen down and perished in it. The approach of cattle is now prevented by a strong lofty wall; but there can be no doubt that, during the last two or three thousand years, great masses of bony breccia must have accumulated in the lower parts of the great fissure, which probably descends through the whole thickness of the scar-limestone, to the depth of perhaps five or six hundred feet."[*]

---

* Buckland, Reliquiæ Diluvianæ, p. 25.

† See p. 221., and places cited there.

When any of these natural pit-falls happen to communicate with lines of subterranean caverns, the bones, earth, and breccia, may sink by their own weight, or be washed into the vaults below.

We have seen that the ravines which opened in Calabria, in 1783, were very numerous, varying in their ordinary depth from fifty to two hundred feet, and that animals were sometimes engulphed during the shocks.[†] If a torrent chance to be in the line of any of these chasms, it might pour in a quantity of alluvial matter under which the animal remains might lie inhumed for ages. Where houses with their inhabitants have been swallowed up in fissures, there appears to have been usually a sliding in of all the loose matter which lay upon the surface; so that, in such rents, we might look for the ruins of buildings, and the skeletons of men and animals, buried in alluvium at the depth often of several hundred feet.

At the north extremity of the rock of Gibraltar are perpendicular fissures, on the ledges of which a number of hawks nestle and rear their young in the breeding season. They throw down from their nests the bones of small birds, mice, and other animals on which they feed, and these are gradually united into a breccia of angular fragments of the decomposing limestone with a cement of red earth.

---

[*] Memoir on the Structure of the Lake Mountains of the North of England, &c., read before the Geological Society, Jan 5. 1831.

[†] Vol. II. p. 268.

At the pass of Escrinet in France, on the northern escarpment of the Coiron hills, near Aubenas, I have seen a breccia in the act of forming. Small pieces of disintegrating limestone are transported, during heavy rains, by a streamlet, to the foot of the declivity, where land shells are very abundant. The shells and pieces of stone soon become cemented together by stalagmite into a compact mass, and the talus thus formed is in one place fifty feet deep, and five hundred yards wide. So firmly is the lowest portion consolidated, that it is quarried for millstones.

I have lately had an opportunity of examining the most celebrated caves of Franconia, and among others that of Rabenstein, newly discovered. Their general form, and the nature and arrangement of their contents, appeared to me to agree perfectly with the notion of their having once served as the channels of subterraneous rivers. This mode of accounting for the introduction of transported matter into the Franconian and other caves, filled up as they often are even to their roofs with osseous breccia, was long ago proposed by M. C. Prevost *, and seems at length to be very generally adopted. But I do not doubt that bears inhabited some of the German caves, or that the cavern of Kirkdale, in Yorkshire, was once the den of hyænas. The abundance of bony dung, associated with hyænas' bones, has been pointed out by Dr. Buckland, and with reason, as confirmatory of this opinion.

*Alternations of stalagmite and alluvium.*—The same author observed in every cave examined by him in Germany that deposits of mud and sand, with or without rolled pebbles and angular fragments of rock, were covered over with a *single* crust of stalagmite.* In the English caves he remarked a similar absence of *alternations* of alluvium and stalagmite. But Dr. Schmerling has discovered in a cavern at Chockier, about two leagues from Liège, three distinct beds of stalagmite, and between each of them a mass of breccia, and mud mixed with quartz pebbles, and in the three deposits the bones of extinct quadrupeds.†

---

* Mém. de la Soc. d'Hist. Nat. de Paris, tom. iv.

This exception does not invalidate the generality of the phenomenon pointed out by Dr. Buckland, one cause of which may perhaps be this, that if several floods pass at different intervals of time through a subterranean passage, the last, if it has power to drift along fragments of rock, will also tear up any alternating stalagmitic and alluvial beds that may have been previously formed. Another cause may be, that a particular line of caverns will rarely be so situated, in relation to the lowest levels of a country, as to become, at two distinct epochs, the receptacle of engulphed rivers; and if this should happen, some of the caves, or at least the tunnels of communication, may at the first period be entirely choked up with transported matter, so as not to allow the subsequent passage of water in the same direction.

As the same chasms may remain open throughout periods of indefinite duration, the species inhabiting a country may in the mean time be greatly changed, and thus the remains of animals belonging to very different epochs may become mingled together in a common tomb. For this reason it is often difficult to separate the monuments of the human epoch from those relating to periods long antecedent, and it was not without great care and skill that Dr. Buckland was enabled to guard against such anachronisms in his investigation of several of the English caves. He mentions that human skeletons were found in the cave of Wokey Hole, near Wells, in the Mendips, dispersed through reddish mud and clay, and some of them united by stalagmite into a firm osseous breccia. "The spot on which they lie is within reach of the highest floods of the adjacent river, and the mud in which they are buried is evidently fluviatile.*

---

* Reliquiæ Diluvianæ, p. 108.

† Journ. de Géol., tom. i. p. 286. July, 1830.

In speaking of the cave of Paviland on the coast of Glamorganshire, the same author states that the entire mass through which bones were dispersed appeared to have been disturbed by ancient diggings, so that the remains of extinct animals had become mixed with recent bones and shells. In the same cave was a human skeleton, and the remains of recent testacea of eatable species, which may have been carried in by man.

In several caverns on the banks of the Meuse, near Liège, Dr. Schmerling has found human bones in the same mud and breccia with those of the elephant, rhinoceros, bear, and other quadrupeds of extinct species. He has observed none of the dung of any of these animals; and from this circumstance, and the appearance of the mud and pebbles, he concludes that these caverns were never inhabited by wild beasts, but washed in by a current of water. As the human skulls and bones were in fragments, and no entire skeleton had been found, he does not believe that these caves were places of sepulture, but that the human remains were washed in at the same time as the bones of extinct quadrupeds.

---

* Reliquiæ Diluvianæ, p. 165.

*Caverns in the South of France.* — Similar associations in the south of France, of human bones and works of art with remains of extinct quadrupeds, have induced some geologists to maintain that man was an inhabitant of that part of Europe before the rhinoceros, hyæna, tiger, and other fossil species disappeared. I may first mention the cavern of Bize, in the department of Aude, where M. Marcel de Serres met with a small number of human bones mixed with those of extinct animals and with land shells. They occur in a calcareous stony mass, bound together by a cement of stalagmite. On examining the same caverns, M. Tournal found not only in these calcareous beds, but also in a black mud which overlies a red osseous mud, several human teeth, together with broken angular fragments of a rude kind of pottery, and also recent marine and terrestrial shells. The teeth preserve their enamel; but the fangs are so much altered as to adhere strongly when applied to the tongue. Of the terrestrial shells thus associated with the bones and pottery, the most common are Cyclostoma elegans, Bulimus decollatus, Helix nemoralis, and H. nitida. Among the marine are found Pecten jacobæus, Mytilus edulis, and Natica mille-punctata, all of them eatable kinds, and which may have been brought there for food. Bones were found in the same mass belonging to three new species of deer, an extinct bear (*Ursus arctoïdeus*), and the wild bull (*Bos urus*), formerly a native of Germany.*

---

* M. Marcel de Serres, Géognosie des Terrains Tertiaires, p. 64. Introduction.

In the same part of France, M. de Christol has found in caverns in a tertiary limestone at Pondres and Souvignargues, two leagues north of Lunel-viel, in the department of Herault, human bones and pottery confusedly mixed with remains of the rhinoceros, bear, hyæna, and other terrestrial mammifers. They were imbedded in alluvial mud, of the solidity of calcareous tufa, and containing some flint pebbles and fragments of the limestone of the country. Beneath this mixed accumulation, which sometimes attained a thickness of thirteen feet, is the original floor of the cavern, about a foot thick, covered with bones and the dung of animals (*album græcum*), in a sandy and tufaceous cement.

The human bones in these caverns of Pondres and Souvignargues were found, upon a careful analysis, to have parted with their animal matter to as great a degree as those of the hyæna which accompany them, and are equally brittle, and adhere as strongly to the tongue.

In order to compare the degree of alteration of these bones with those known to be of high antiquity, M. Marcel de Serres, and M. Ballard, chemist of Montpellier, procured some from a Gaulish sarcophagus in the plain of Lunel, supposed to have been buried for fourteen or fifteen centuries at least. In these the cellular tissue was empty, but they were more solid than fresh bones. They did not adhere to the tongue in the same manner as those of the caverns of Bize and Pondres, yet they had lost at least three fourths of their original animal matter.

The superior solidity of the Gaulish bones to those in a fresh skeleton is a fact in perfect accordance with the observations made by Mr. Mantell on bones taken from a Saxon tumulus near Lewes.

M. Teissier has also described a cavern near Mialet, in the department of Gard, where the remains of the bear and other animals were mingled confusedly with human bones, coarse pottery, teeth pierced for amulets, pointed fragments of bone, bracelets of bronze, and a Roman urn. Part of this deposit reached to the roof of the cavity, and adhered firmly to it. The author suggests that the exterior portion of the grotto may at one period have been a den of bears, and that afterwards the aboriginal inhabitants of the country took possession of it either for a dwelling or a burial place, and left there the coarse pottery, amulets, and pointed pieces of bone. At a third period the Romans may have used the cavern as a place of sepulture or concealment, and to them may have belonged the urn and bracelets of metal. If we then suppose the course of the neighbouring river to be impeded by some temporary cause, a flood would be occasioned, which, rushing into the open grotto, may have washed all the remains into the interior caves and tunnels, heaping the whole confusedly together.*

In the controversy which has arisen on this subject MM. Marcel de Serres, De Christol, Tournal, and others, have contended, that the phenomena of this and other caverns in the south of France prove that the fossil rhinoceros, hyæna, bear, and several other lost species, were once contemporaneous inhabitants of the country, together with man; while M. Desnoyers has supported the opposite opinion. The flint hatchets and arrow heads, he says, and the pointed bones and coarse pottery of many French and English caves, agree precisely in character with those found in the tumuli, and under the dolmens (rude altars of unhewn stone) of the primitive inhabitants of Gaul, Britain, and Germany. The human bones, therefore, in the caves which are associated with such fabricated objects, must belong not to antediluvian periods, but to a people in the same stage of civilization as those who constructed the tumuli and altars.

---

* Bull. de la Soc. Géol. de France, tom. ii. pp. 56—63.

In the Gaulish monuments, we find, together with the objects of industry above mentioned, the bones of wild and domestic animals of species now inhabiting Europe, particularly of deer, sheep, wild boars, dogs, horses, and oxen. This fact has been ascertained in Quercy, and other provinces; and it is supposed by antiquaries, that the animals in question were placed beneath the Celtic altars in memory of sacrifices offered to the Gaulish divinity Hesus, and in the tombs to commemorate funeral repasts, and also from a superstition prevalent among savage nations, which induces them to lay up provisions for the manes of the dead in a future life. But in none of these ancient monuments have any bones been found of the elephant, rhinoceros, hyæna, tiger, and other quadrupeds, such as are found in caves, as might certainly have been expected, had these species continued to flourish at the time that this part of Gaul was inhabited by man.*

We are also reminded by M. Desnoyers of a passage in Florus, in which it is related that Cæsar ordered the caves into which the Aquitanian Gauls had retreated to be closed up.† It is also on record, that, so late as the eighth century, the Aquitanians defended themselves in caverns against King Pepin. As many of these caverns, therefore, may have served in succession as temples and habitations, as places of sepulture, concealment, or defence, it is easy to conceive that human bones, and those of animals, in osseous breccias of much older date, may have been swept away together, by inundations, and then buried in one promiscuous heap.

---

* Desnoyers, Bull. de la Soc. Géol. de France, tom. ii. p. 252.

† Hist. Rom. Epit., lib. iii. c. 10.

It is not on the evidence of such intermixtures that we ought readily to admit either the high antiquity of the human race, or the recent date of certain lost species of quadrupeds.

# CHAPTER XV.

## IMBEDDING OF ORGANIC REMAINS IN SUBAQUEOUS DEPOSITS.

**Division of the subject — Imbedding of terrestrial animals and plants — Increased specific gravity of wood sunk to great depths in the sea — Drift timber of the Mackenzie in Slave Lake and polar sea — Floating trees in the Mississippi (p. 245.)—in the Gulf Stream — on the coast of Iceland, Spitzbergen, and Labrador—Imbedding of the remains of insects — of reptiles — Bones of birds why rare — Imbedding of terrestrial quadrupeds by river-floods (p. 251.) — Skeletons in recent shell marl — Imbedding of mammiferous remains in marine strata.**

*Division of the subject.*—HAVING treated of the imbedding of organic remains in deposits formed upon the land, I shall next consider the including of the same in deposits formed under water.

It will be convenient to divide this branch of our subject into three parts; considering, first, the various modes whereby the relics of *terrestrial* species may be buried in subaqueous formations; secondly, the modes whereby animals and plants inhabiting *fresh water* may be so entombed; thirdly, how *marine* species may become preserved in new strata.

The phenomena above enumerated demand a fuller share of attention than those previously examined, since the deposits which originate upon dry land are insignificant in thickness, superficial extent, and durability, when contrasted with those of subaqueous origin. At the same time, the study of the latter is beset with greater difficulties; for we are here concerned with the results of processes much farther removed from the sphere of ordinary observation. There is, indeed, no circumstance which so seriously impedes the acquisition of just views in our science as an habitual disregard of the important fact, that the reproductive effects of the principal agents of change are confined to another element—to that larger portion of the globe, from which, by our very organization, we are almost entirely excluded.*

### *Imbedding of Terrestrial Plants.*

When a tree falls into a river from the undermining of the banks, or from being washed in by a torrent or flood, it floats on the surface, not because the woody portion is specifically lighter than water, but because it is full of pores containing air. When soaked for a considerable time, the water makes its way into these pores, and the wood becomes *water-logged* and sinks. The time required for this process varies in different woods; but several kinds may be drifted to great distances, sometimes across the ocean, before they lose their buoyancy.

*Wood sunk to a great depth in the sea.*—If wood be sunk to vast depths in the sea, it may be impregnated with water suddenly. Captain Scoresby informs us, in his Account of the Arctic Regions †, that on one occasion a whale, on being harpooned, ran out all the lines in the boat, which it then dragged under water, to the depth of several thousand feet, the men having just time to escape to a piece of ice. When the fish returned to the surface "to blow," it was struck a second time, and soon afterwards killed. The moment it expired it began to sink,—an unusual circumstance, which was found to be caused by the weight of the sunken boat, which still remained attached to it. By means of harpoons and ropes the fish was prevented from sinking, until it was released from the weight by connecting a rope to the lines of the attached boat, which was no sooner done than the fish rose again to the surface. The sunken boat was then hauled up with great labour; for so heavy was it, that although before the accident it would have been buoyant when full of water, yet it now required a boat at each end to keep it from sinking. "When it was hoisted into the ship, the paint came off the wood in large sheets; and the planks, which were of wainscot, were as completely soaked in every pore as if they had lain at the bottom of the sea since the flood! A wooden apparatus that accompanied the boat in its progress through the deep, consisting chiefly of a piece of thick deal, about fifteen inches square, happened to fall overboard, and, though it originally consisted of the lightest fir, sank in the water like a stone. The boat was rendered useless: even the wood of which it was built, on being offered to the cook for fuel, was tried and rejected as incombustible."*

---

* See Book i. chap. v.

† Vol. ii. p. 191.

Captain Scoresby found that, by sinking pieces of fir, elm, ash, &c., to the depth of four thousand and sometimes six thousand feet, they became impregnated with sea-water, and when drawn up again, after immersion, for an hour, would no longer float. The effect of this impregnation was to increase the dimensions as well as the specific gravity of the wood, every solid inch having increased one-twentieth in size and twenty-one twenty-fifths in weight.*

---

* Account of the Arctic Regions, vol. ii. p. 193.

*Drift-wood of the Mackenzie River.*—When timber is drifted down by a river, it is often arrested by lakes; and, becoming water-logged, it may sink and be imbedded in lacustrine strata, if any be there forming: sometimes a portion floats on till it reaches the sea. In the course of the Mackenzie River we have an example of vast accumulations of vegetable matter now in progress under both these circumstances.

In Slave Lake in particular, which vies in dimensions with some of the great fresh-water seas of Canada, the quantity of drift-timber brought down annually is enormous. "As the trees," says Dr. Richardson, "retain their roots, which are often loaded with earth and stones, they readily sink, especially when water-soaked; and, accumulating in the eddies, form shoals, which ultimately augment into islands. A thicket of small willows covers the new-formed island as soon as it appears above water, and their fibrous roots serve to bind the whole firmly together. Sections of these islands are annually made by the river, assisted by the frost; and it is interesting to study the diversity of appearances they present, according to their different ages. The trunks of the trees gradually decay until they are converted into a blackish brown substance resembling peat, but which still retains more or less of the fibrous structure of the wood; and layers of this often alternate with layers of clay and sand, the whole being penetrated, to the depth of four or five yards or more, by the long fibrous roots of the willows. A deposition of this kind, with the aid of a little infiltration of bituminous matter, would produce an excellent imitation of coal, with vegetable impressions of the willow-roots. What appeared most remarkable was the horizontal slaty structure that the older alluvial banks presented, or the *regular curve* that the strata assumed from unequal subsidence.

---

* Account of the Arctic Regions, vol. ii. p. 202.

"It was in the rivers only that we could observe sections of these deposits; but the same operation goes on on a much more magnificent scale in the lakes. A shoal of many miles in extent is formed on the south side of Athabasca Lake, by the drift-timber and vegetable debris brought down by the Elk River; and the Slave Lake itself must in process of time be filled up by the matters daily conveyed into it from Slave River. Vast quantities of drift-timber are buried under the sand at the mouth of the river, and enormous piles of it are accumulated on the shores of every part of the lake." *

The banks of the Mackenzie display almost every where horizontal beds of wood coal, alternating with bituminous clay, gravel, sand, and friable sandstone; sections, in short, of such deposits as are now evidently forming at the bottom of the lakes which it traverses.

Notwithstanding the vast forests intercepted by the lakes, a still greater mass of drift-wood is found where the Mackenzie reaches the sea, in a latitude where no wood grows at present except a few stunted willows. At the mouths of the river the alluvial matter has formed a barrier of islands and shoals, where we may expect a great formation of coal at some distant period.

---

* Dr. Richardson's Geognost. Obs. on Capt. Franklin's Polar Expedition.

The abundance of floating timber on the Mackenzie is owing, as Dr. Richardson informs me, to the direction and to the length of the course of this river, which runs from south to north, so that the sources of the stream lie in much warmer latitudes than its mouths. In the country, therefore, where the sources are situated, the frost breaks up at an earlier season, while yet the waters in the lower part of its course are ice-bound. Hence the current of water, rushing down northward, reaches a point where the thaw has not begun, and, finding the channel of the river blocked up with ice, it overflows the banks, sweeping through forests of pines, and carrying away thousands of uprooted trees.

*Drift-wood of the Mississippi.* — I have already observed that the navigation of the Mississippi is much impeded by trunks of trees half sunk in the river.* On reaching the Gulf of Mexico many of them subside, and are imbedded in the new strata which form the delta, but many of them float on and enter the Gulf stream. "Tropical plants (says M. Constant Prevost) are taken up by this great current, and carried in a northerly direction, till they reach the shores of Iceland and Spitzbergen uninjured. A great portion of them are doubtless arrested on their passage, and probably always in the same inlets, or the same spots on the bottom of the ocean; in fact, wherever an eddy or calm determines their distribution, which, in this single example, extends over a space comprehended between the equator and the eightieth degree of latitude — an immense space, six times more considerable than that occupied by all Europe, and thirty times larger than France. The drifting of various substances, though regular, is not continual; it takes place by intermittance after great inundations of rivers, and in the intervals the waters may carry sand only or mud, or each of these alternately, to the same localities."*

---

* Vol. I. p. 283.

*Drift-timber on coasts of Iceland, Spitzbergen, &c.* — The ancient forests of Iceland, observes Malte-Brun, have been improvidently exhausted; but, although the Icelander can obtain no timber from the land, he is supplied with it abundantly by the ocean. An immense quantity of thick trunks of pines, firs, and other trees, are thrown upon the northern coast of the island, especially upon North Cape and Cape Langaness, and are then carried by the waves along these two promontories to other parts of the coast, so as to afford sufficiency of wood for fuel and for constructing boats. Timber is also carried to the shores of Labrador and Greenland; and Crantz assures us that the masses of floating wood thrown by the waves upon the island of John de Mayen often equal the whole of that island in extent.†

In a similar manner the bays of Spitzbergen are filled with drift-wood, which accumulates also upon those parts of the coast of Siberia that are exposed to the east, consisting of larch trees, pines, Siberian cedars, firs, and Fernambucco and Campeachy woods. These trunks appear to have been swept away by the great rivers of Asia and America. Some of them are brought from the Gulf of Mexico, by the Bahama stream; while others are hurried forward by the current which, to the north of Siberia, constantly sets in from east to west. Some of these trees have been deprived of their bark by friction, but are in such a state of preservation as to form excellent building timber.* Parts of the branches and almost all the roots remain fixed to the pines which have been drifted into the North Sea, into latitudes too cold for the growth of such timber, but the trunks are usually barked.

---

* Mém. de la Soc. d'Hist. Nat de Paris, vol. iv. p. 84.

† Malte-Brun, Geog., vol. v. part i. p. 112.—Crantz, Hist. of Greenland, tome i. pp. 50—54.

*Lighter parts of plants carried out to sea by hurricanes.* — The leaves and lighter parts of plants are seldom carried out to sea, in any part of the globe, except during tropical hurricanes among islands, and during the agitations of the atmosphere which sometimes accompany earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.†

*Comparative number of living and fossilized species of plants.*—It will appear from these observations that, although the remains of terrestrial vegetation, borne down by aqueous causes from the land, are chiefly deposited at the bottom of lakes or at the mouths of rivers; yet a considerable quantity is drifted about in all directions by currents, and may become imbedded in any *marine* formation, or may sink down, when water-logged, to the bottom of unfathomable abysses, and there accumulate without intermixture of other substances.

It may be asked whether we have any data for inferring that the remains of a considerable proportion of the existing species of plants will be permanently preserved, so as to be hereafter recognizable, supposing the strata now in progress to be at some future period upraised? To this inquiry it may be answered, that there are no reasons for expecting that more than a small number of the plants now flourishing in the globe will become fossilized; since the entire habitations of a great number of them are remote from lakes and seas, and even where they grow near to large bodies of water, the circumstances are quite accidental and partial which favour the imbedding and conservation of vegetable remains. Suppose, for example, that the species of plants inhabiting the hydrographical basin of the Rhine, or that region, extending from the Alps to the sea, which is watered by the Rhine and its numerous tributaries, to be about 2500 in number, exclusive of the cryptogamic class. This estimate is by no means exaggerated; yet if a geologist could explore the deposits which have resulted from the sediment of the Rhine in the lake of Constance, and off the coast of Holland, he might scarcely be able to obtain from the recent strata the leaves, wood, and seeds of *fifty* species in such a state of preservation as to enable a botanist to determine their specific characters with certainty.

---

* Olafsen, Voyage to Iceland, tome i. Malte-Brun's Geog. vol. v. part i. p. 112.

† De la Beche, Geol. Manual, p. 477.

Those naturalists, therefore, who infer that the ancient flora of the globe was, at certain periods, less varied than now, merely because they have as yet discovered only a few hundred fossil species of a particular epoch, while they can enumerate more than fifty thousand living ones, are reasoning on a false basis, and their standard of comparison is not the same in the two cases.

### *Imbedding of the Remains of Insects.*

I have observed the elytra and other parts of beetles in a band of fissile clay, separating two beds of recent shell-marl, in the Loch of Kinnordy in Forfarshire. Amongst these, Mr. Curtis recognized Elater lineatus and Atopa cervina, species still living in Scotland. These, as well as other remains which accompanied them, appear to belong to terrestrial, not aquatic, species, and must have been carried down in muddy water during an inundation. In the lacustrine peat of the same locality, the elytra of beetles are not uncommon; but in the deposits of drained lakes generally, and in the silt of our estuaries, the relics of this class of the animal kingdom are rare. In the blue clay of very modern origin of Lewes levels, Mr. Mantell has found the Indusia, or cases of the larvæ of Phryganea, in abundance, with minute shells belonging to the genera Phanorbis, Limnea, &c., adhering to them.*

When speaking of the migrations of insects, I pointed out that an immense number are floated into lakes and seas by rivers, or blown by winds far from the land; but they are so buoyant that we can only suppose them, under very peculiar circumstances, to sink to the bottom before they are either devoured by insectivorous animals or decomposed.

### *Remains of Reptiles.*

As the bodies of several crocodiles were found in the mud brought down to the sea by the river inundation which attended an earthquake in Java in the year 1699, we may imagine that extraordinary floods of mud may stifle many individuals of the shoals of alligators and other reptiles which frequent lakes and the deltas of rivers in tropical climates. Thousands of frogs were found leaping about among the wreck carried into the sea by the late inundations in Morayshire*; and it is evident that whenever a sea-cliff is undermined, or land is swept by other violent causes into the sea, land reptiles may be carried in.

---

* Trans. Geol. Soc., vol. iii. part i. p. 201. second series.

### *Remains of Birds.*

We might have anticipated that the imbedding of the remains of birds in new strata would be of very rare occurrence, for their powers of flight insure them against perishing by numerous casualties to which quadrupeds are exposed during floods; and if they chance to be drowned, or to die when swimming on the water, it will scarcely ever happen that they will be submerged so as to become preserved in sedimentary deposits. In consequence of the hollow tubular structure of their bones and the quantity of their feathers, they are extremely light in proportion to their volume; so that when first killed they do not sink to the bottom like quadrupeds, but float on the surface until the carcass either rots away or is devoured by predaceous animals. To these causes we may ascribe the absence of any vestige of the bones of birds in the recent marl formations of Scotland; although these lakes, until the moment when they were artificially drained, were frequented by a great abundance of water-fowl.

Sir T. D. Lauder records that some aquatic birds were dashed to pieces by the impetuous waters of the

---

* Sir T. D. Lauder's Account, second edition, p. 312.

Deveron, in Aberdeenshire, as they rushed through a narrow pass among the rocks during the floods of 1829.* In this manner torrents charged with mud may occasionally deposit the remains of birds in lacustrine strata.

### *Imbedding of Terrestrial Quadrupeds.*

River inundations recur in most climates at very irregular intervals, and expend their fury on those rich alluvial plains, where herds of herbivorous quadrupeds congregate together. These animals are often surprised; and being unable to stem the current, are hurried along until they are drowned, when they sink at first immediately to the bottom. Here their bodies are drifted along, together with sediment, into lakes or seas, and may then be covered by a mass of mud, sand, and pebbles, thrown down upon them. If there be no sediment superimposed, the gases generated by putrefaction usually cause the bodies to rise again to the surface about the ninth, or at latest the fourteenth day. The pressure of a thin covering of mud would not be sufficient to retain them at the bottom; for we see the putrid carcasses of dogs and cats, even in rivers, floating with considerable weights attached to them, and in sea-water they would be still more buoyant.

Where the body is so buried in drift-sand, or mud accumulated upon it, as never to rise again, the skeleton may be preserved entire; but if it comes again to the surface while in the process of putrefaction, the bones commonly fall piecemeal from the floating carcass, and may in that case be scattered at random over the bottom of a lake, estuary, or sea; so that a jaw may afterwards be found in one place, a rib in another, a humerus in a third—all included, perhaps, in a matrix of fine materials, where there may be evidence of very slight transporting power in the current, or even of none, but simply of some chemical precipitate.

---

* Account of the Great Floods, &c., second ed. p. 330.

A large number of the bodies of drowned animals, if they float into the sea or a lake, especially in hot climates, are instantly devoured by sharks, alligators, and other carnivorous beasts, which may have power to digest even the bones; but during extraordinary floods, when the greatest number of land animals are destroyed, the waters are commonly so turbid, especially at the bottom of the channel, that even aquatic species are compelled to escape into some retreat where there is clearer water, lest they should be stifled. For this reason, as well as the rapidity of sedimentary deposition at such seasons, the probability of carcasses becoming permanently imbedded is considerable.

*Flood in the Solway Firth*, 1794.—One of the most memorable floods of modern date, in our island, is that which visited part of the southern borders of Scotland, on the 24th of January, 1794, and which spread particular devastation over the country adjoining the Solway Firth.

We learn from the account of Captain Napier, that the heavy rains had swollen every stream which entered the Firth of Solway; so that the inundation not only carried away a great number of cattle and sheep, but many of the herdsmen and shepherds, washing down their bodies into the estuary. After the storm, when the flood subsided, an extraordinary spectacle was seen on a large sand-bank, called "the beds of

Esk," where there is a meeting of the tidal waters, and where heavy bodies are usually left stranded after great floods. On this single bank were found collected together the bodies of 9 black cattle, 3 horses, 1840 sheep, 45 dogs, 180 hares, besides a great number of smaller animals, and, mingled with the rest, the corpses of two men and one woman.*

*Floods in Scotland*, 1829. — In those more recent floods in Scotland, in August, 1829, whereby a fertile district, on the east coast, became a scene of dreadful desolation, a vast number of animals and plants were washed from the land, and found scattered about after the storm, around the mouths of the principal rivers. An eye-witness thus describes the scene which presented itself at the mouth of the Spey, in Morayshire: —"For several miles along the beach crowds were employed in endeavouring to save the wood and other wreck with which the heavy-rolling tide was loaded; whilst the margin of the sea was strewed with the carcasses of domestic animals, and with millions of dead hares and rabbits. Thousands of living frogs, also, swept from the fields, no one can say how far off, were observed leaping among the wreck." †

*Savannahs of South America.* — We are informed by Humboldt, that during the periodical swellings of the large rivers in South America great numbers of quadrupeds are annually drowned. Of the wild horses, for example, which graze in immense troops in the savannahs, thousands are said to perish when the river Apure is swollen, before they have time to reach the rising ground of the Llanos. The mares, during the season of high water, may be seen, followed by their colts, swimming about and feeding on the grass, of which the top alone waves above the waters. In this state they are pursued by crocodiles; and their thighs frequently bear the prints of the teeth of these carnivorous reptiles. "Such is the pliability," observes the celebrated traveller, "of the organization of the animals which man has subjected to his sway, that horses, cows, and other species of European origin, lead, for a time, an amphibious life, surrounded by crocodiles, water-serpents, and manatees. When the rivers return again into their beds, they roam in the savannah, which is then spread over with a fine odoriferous grass, and enjoy, as in their native climate, the renewed vegetation of spring."*

---

* Treatise on Practical Store Farming, p. 25.

† Sir T. D. Lauder's Floods in Morayshire, 1829, p. 312., second ed.; and see above, Vol. I. p. 262.

*Floods of the Ganges.*— We find it continually stated, by those who describe the Ganges and Burrampooter, that these rivers carry before them, during the flood season, not only floats of reeds and timber, but dead bodies of men, deer, and oxen.†

*In Java*, 1699.—I have already referred to the effects of a flood which attended an earthquake in Java in 1699, when the turbid waters of the Batavian river destroyed all the fish except the carp; and when drowned buffaloes, tigers, rhinoceroses, deer, apes, and other wild beasts, were brought down to the sea-coast by the current, with several crocodiles which had been stifled in the mud.‡

On the western side of the same island, in the territory of Goulongong, in the Regencies, a more recent volcanic eruption (1821) was attended by a flood, during which the river Tjetandoy bore down hundreds of carcasses of rhinoceroses and buffaloes, and swept away more than one hundred men and women from a multitude assembled on its banks to celebrate a festival. Whether the bodies reached the sea, or were deposited, with drift matter, in some of the large intervening alluvial plains, we are not informed.*

---

* Humboldt's Pers. Nar., vol. iv. pp. 394—396.

† Malte-Brun, Geog., vol. iii. p. 22.

‡ See Vol. II. p. 304.

*In Virginia*, 1771.—I might enumerate a great number of local deluges that have swept through the fertile lands bordering on large rivers, especially in tropical countries, but I should surpass the limits assigned to this work. I may observe, however, that the destruction of the islands, in rivers, is often attended with great loss of lives. Thus when the principal river in Virginia rose, in 1771, to the height of twenty-five feet above its ordinary level, it swept entirely away Elk Island, on which were seven hundred head of quadrupeds,—horses, oxen, sheep, and hogs,—and nearly one hundred houses.†

The reader will gather, from what was before said respecting the deposition of sediment by aqueous causes, that the greater number of the remains of quadrupeds drifted away by rivers must be intercepted by lakes before they reach the sea, or buried in fresh-water formations near the mouths of rivers. If they are carried still farther, the probabilities are increased of their rising to the surface in a state of putrefaction, and, in that case, of being there devoured by aquatic beasts of prey, or of subsiding into some spots whither no sediment is conveyed, and, consequently, where every vestige of them will, in the course of time, disappear.

---

* This account I had from Mr. Baumhauer, Director-General of Finances in Java.

† Scots Mag., vol. xxxiii.

*Skeletons of animals in recent shell-marl, Scotland.*— In some instances, the skeletons of quadrupeds are met with abundantly in recent shell-marls in Scotland, where we cannot suppose them to have been imbedded by the action of rivers or floods. They all belong to species which now inhabit, or are known to have been indigenous in, Scotland. The remains of several hundred skeletons have been procured within the last century, from five or six small lakes in Forfarshire, where shell-marl has been worked. Those of the stag (*Cervus elaphus*) are most numerous; and if the others be arranged in the order of their relative abundance, they will follow nearly thus:— the ox, the boar, the horse, the sheep, the dog, the hare, the fox, the wolf, and the cat. The beaver seems extremely rare; but it has been found in the shell-marl of Loch Marlie, in Perthshire, and in the parish of Edrom, in Berwickshire.

In the greater part of these lake deposits there are no signs of floods; and the expanse of water was originally so confined, that the smallest of the above-mentioned quadrupeds could have crossed, by swimming, from one shore to the other. Deer, and such species as take readily to the water, may often have been mired in trying to land, where the bottom was soft and quaggy, and in their efforts to escape may have plunged deeper into the marly bottom. Some individuals, I suspect, of different species, have fallen in when crossing the frozen surface in winter; for nothing can be more treacherous than the ice when covered with snow, in consequence of the springs, which are numerous, and which, retaining always an equal temperature, cause the ice, in certain spots, to be extremely thin, while in every other part of the lake it is strong enough to bear the heaviest weights.

*Mammiferous remains in marine strata.*—As the bones of mammalia are often so abundantly preserved in peat, and such lakes as have just been described, the encroachments of a sea upon a coast may sometimes throw down the imbedded skeletons, so that they may be carried away by tides and currents, and entombed in subaqueous formations. Some of the smaller quadrupeds, also, which burrow in the ground, as well as reptiles and every species of plant, are liable to be cast down into the waves by this cause, which must not be overlooked, although I believe it to be of comparatively small importance amongst the numerous agents whereby terrestrial organic remains are included in submarine strata.

# CHAPTER XVI.

## IMBEDDING OF THE REMAINS OF MAN AND HIS WORKS IN SUBAQUEOUS STRATA.

Drifting of human bodies to the sea by river inundations — Destruction of bridges and houses — Loss of lives by shipwreck — How human corpses may be preserved in recent deposits — Number of wrecked vessels — Fossil skeletons of men (p. 265.) — fossil canoes, ships, and works of art — Chemical changes which metallic articles have undergone after long submergence — Imbedding of cities and forests in subaqueous strata by subsidence (p. 272.) — Earthquake of Cutch in 1819 — Submarine forests — Example on coast of Hampshire — Origin of a submarine forest — Berkley's arguments for the recent date of the creation of man (p. 278.) — Concluding remarks.

I SHALL now proceed to inquire in what manner the mortal remains of man and the works of his hands may be permanently preserved in subaqueous strata. Of the many hundred million human beings which perish in the course of every century on the land, every vestige is usually destroyed in the course of a few thousand years; but of the smaller number that perish in the waters, a considerable proportion must frequently be entombed under such circumstances, that parts of them may endure throughout entire geological epochs.

The bodies of men, together with those of the inferior animals, are occasionally washed down during river inundations into seas and lakes.* Belzoni witnessed a flood on the Nile in September, 1818, where, although the river rose only three feet and a half above its ordinary level, several villages, with some hundreds of men, women, and children, were swept away.* It was before mentioned that a rise of six feet of water in the Ganges, in 1763, was attended with a much greater loss of lives.†

---

* See pp. 253. 255.

In the year 1771, when the inundations in the north of England appear to have equalled the recent floods in Morayshire, a great number of houses and their inhabitants were swept away by the rivers Tyne, Can, Wear, Tees, and Greta; and no less than twenty-one bridges were destroyed in the courses of these rivers. At the village of Bywell the flood tore the dead bodies and coffins out of the churchyard, and bore them away, together with many of the living inhabitants. During the same tempest an immense number of cattle, horses, and sheep, were also transported to the sea, while the whole coast was covered with the wreck of ships. Four centuries before (in 1338), the same district had been visited by a similar continuance of heavy rains followed by disastrous floods, and it is not improbable that these catastrophes may recur periodically. As the population increases, and buildings and bridges are multiplied, we must expect the loss of lives and property to augment. ‡

*Fossilization of human bodies in the bed of the sea.*— If to the hundreds of human bodies committed to the deep in the way of ordinary burial we add those of individuals lost by shipwreck, we shall find that, in the course of a single year, a great number of human remains are consigned to the subaqueous regions. I shall hereafter advert to a calculation by which it appears that more than five hundred *British* vessels alone, averaging each a burthen of about one hundred and twenty tons, are wrecked, and sink to the bottom, *annually*. Of these the crews for the most part escape, although it sometimes happens that all perish. In one great naval action several thousand individuals sometimes share a watery grave.

---

* Narrative of Discovery in Egypt, &c., London, 1820.

† Vol. I. p. 359.

‡ Scots Mag., vol. xxxiii., 1771.

Many of these corpses are instantly devoured by predaceous fish, sometimes before they reach the bottom; still more frequently when they rise again to the surface, and float in a state of putrefaction. Many decompose on the floor of the ocean, where no sediment is thrown down upon them; but if they fall upon a reef where corals and shells are becoming agglutinated into a solid rock, or subside where the delta of a river is advancing, they may be preserved for an incalculable series of ages.

Often at the distance of a few hundred feet from a coral reef, where wrecks are not unfrequent, there are no soundings at the depth of many hundred fathoms. Canoes, merchant vessels, and ships of war, may have sunk and have been enveloped, in such situations, in calcareous sand and breccia, detached by the breakers from the summit of a submarine mountain. Should a volcanic eruption happen to cover such remains with ashes and sand, and a current of lava be afterwards poured over them, the ships and human skeletons might remain uninjured beneath the superincumbent mass, like the houses and works of art in the subterranean cities of Campania. Already many human remains have been thus preserved beneath formations more than a thousand feet in thickness; for, in some volcanic archipelagos, a period of thirty or forty centuries might well be supposed sufficient for such an accumulation.

It was stated that, at the distance of about forty miles from the base of the delta of the Ganges, there is a circular space about fifteen miles in diameter where soundings of a thousand feet sometimes fail to reach the bottom.* As during the flood season the quantity of mud and sand poured by the great rivers into the Bay of Bengal is so great that the sea only recovers its transparency at the distance of sixty miles from the coast, this depression must be gradually shoaling, especially as during the monsoons the sea, loaded with mud and sand, is beaten back in that direction towards the delta. Now, if a ship or human body sink down to the bottom in such a spot, it is by no means improbable that it may become buried under a depth of three or four thousand feet of sediment in the same number of years.

Even on that part of the floor of the ocean to which no accession of drift matter is carried (a part which probably constitutes, at any given period, by far the larger proportion of the whole submarine area), there are circumstances accompanying a wreck which favour the conservation of skeletons. For when the vessel fills suddenly with water, especially in the night, many persons are drowned between decks and in their cabins, so that their bodies are prevented from rising again to the surface. The vessel often strikes upon an uneven bottom, and is overturned; in which case the ballast, consisting of sand, shingle, and rock, or the cargo, frequently composed of heavy and durable materials, may be thrown down upon the carcasses. In the case of ships of war, cannon, shot, and other warlike stores, may press down with their weight the timbers of the vessel as they decay, and beneath these and the metallic substances the bones of man may be preserved.

---

* Vol. I. p. 355.

*Number of wrecked vessels.* — When we reflect on the number of curious monuments consigned to the bed of the ocean in the course of every naval war from the earliest times, our conceptions are greatly raised respecting the multiplicity of lasting memorials which man is leaving of his labours. During our last great struggle with France, thirty-two of our ships of the line went to the bottom in the space of twenty-two years, besides seven 50-gun ships, eighty-six frigates, and a multitude of smaller vessels. The navies of the other European powers, France, Holland, Spain, and Denmark, were almost annihilated during the same period, so that the aggregate of their losses must have many times exceeded that of Great Britain. In every one of these ships were batteries of cannon constructed of iron or brass, whereof a great number had the dates and places of their manufacture inscribed upon them in letters cast in metal. In each there were coins of copper, silver, and often many of gold, capable of serving as valuable historical monuments; in each were an infinite variety of instruments of the arts of war and peace; many formed of materials, such as glass and earthenware, capable of lasting for indefinite ages when once removed from the mechanical action of the waves, and buried under a mass of matter which may exclude the corroding action of sea-water.

But let it not be imagined that the fury of war is more conducive than the peaceful spirit of commercial enterprise to the accumulation of wrecked vessels in the bed of the sea. From an examination of Lloyd's lists, from the year 1793 to the commencement of 1829, Capt. W. H. Smyth ascertained that the number of *British vessels* alone lost during that period amounted on an average to no less than one and a half *daily;* an extent of loss which would hardly have been anticipated, although we learn from Moreau's tables that the number of merchant vessels employed at one time, in the navigation of England and Scotland, amounts to about twenty thousand, having one with another a mean burthen of 120 tons.* My friend, Mr. J. L. Prevost, also informs me that on inspecting Lloyd's lists for the years 1829, 1830, and 1831, he finds that no less than 1953 vessels were lost in those three years, their average tonnage being above 150 tons, or in all nearly 300,000 tons, being at the enormous rate of 100,000 tons annually of the merchant vessels of one nation only. This increased loss arises, I presume, from increasing activity in commerce.

Out of 551 ships of the royal navy lost to the country during the period above mentioned, only 160 were taken or destroyed by the enemy, the rest having either stranded or foundered, or having been burnt by accident; a striking proof that the dangers of our naval warfare, however great, may be far exceeded by the storm, the shoal, the lee-shore, and all the other perils of the deep.†

*Durable nature of many of their contents.* — Millions of silver dollars and other coins have been sometimes submerged in a single ship, and on these, when they happen to be enveloped in a matrix capable of protecting them from chemical changes, much information of historical interest will remain inscribed, and endure for periods as indefinite as have the delicate markings of zoophytes or lapidified plants in some of the ancient secondary rocks. In almost every large ship, moreover, there are some precious stones set in seals, and other articles of use and ornament composed of the hardest substances in nature, on which letters and various images are carved — engravings which they may retain when included in subaqueous strata, as long as a crystal preserves its natural form.

---

* Cæsar Moreau's Tables of the Navigation of Great Britain.

† I give these results on the authority of Captain W. H. Smyth, R.N.

It was, therefore, a splendid boast, that the deeds of the English chivalry at Agincourt made Henry's chronicle

> ——— as rich with praise
> As is the ooze and bottom of the deep
> With sunken wreck and sumless treasuries;

for it is probable that a greater number of monuments of the skill and industry of man will, in the course of ages, be collected together in the bed of the ocean, than will be seen at any one time on the surface of the continents.

If our species be of as recent a date as is generally supposed, it will be vain to seek for the remains of man and the works of his hands imbedded in submarine strata, except in those regions where violent earthquakes are frequent, and the alterations of relative level so great, that the bed of the sea may have been converted into land within the historical era. We need not despair, however, of the discovery of such monuments when those regions which have been peopled by man from the earliest ages, and which are at the same time the principal theatres of volcanic action, shall be examined by the joint skill of the antiquary and geologist.

*Power of human remains to resist decay.* — There can be no doubt that human remains are as capable of resisting decay as are the harder parts of the inferior animals; and I have already cited the remark of Cuvier, that "in ancient fields of battle the bones of men have suffered as little decomposition as those of horses which were buried in the same grave."* In the delta of the Ganges bones of men have been found in digging a well at the depth of ninety feet†; but as that river frequently shifts its course and fills up its ancient channels, we are not called upon to suppose that these bodies are of extremely high antiquity, or that they were buried when that part of the surrounding delta where they occur was first gained from the sea.

*Fossil skeletons of men.* — Several skeletons of men, more or less mutilated, have been found in the West Indies, on the north-west coast of the main land of Guadaloupe, in a kind of rock which is known to be forming daily, and which consists of minute fragments of shells and corals, incrusted with a calcareous cement resembling travertin, by which also the different grains are bound together. The lens show that some of the fragments of coral composing this stone still retain the same red colour which is seen in the reefs of living coral which surround the island. The shells belong to species of the neighbouring sea intermixed with some terrestrial kinds which now live on the island, and among them is the Bulimus Guadaloupensis of

---

* Vol. I. p. 241. † Von Hoff, vol. i. p. 379.

Férussac. The human skeletons still retain some of their animal matter, and all their phosphate of lime. One of them, of which the head is wanting, may now be seen in the British Museum, and another in the Royal Cabinet at Paris. According to Mr. König, the rock in which the former is inclosed is harder under the mason's saw and chisel than statuary marble. It is described as forming a kind of glacis, probably an indurated beach, which slants from the steep cliffs of the island to the sea, and is nearly all submerged at high tide.

Similar formations are in progress in the whole of the West-Indian archipelago, and they have greatly extended the plain of Cayes in St. Domingo, where fragments of vases and other human works have been found at a depth of twenty feet. In digging wells also near Catania, in Sicily, tools have been discovered in a rock somewhat similar.

*Buried ships, canoes, and works of art.*—When a vessel is stranded in shallow water, it usually becomes the nucleus of a sand-bank, as has been exemplified in several of our harbours, and this circumstance tends greatly to its preservation. About fifty years ago, a vessel from Purbeck, laden with three hundred tons of stone, struck on a shoal off the entrance of Poole harbour and foundered; the crew were saved, but the vessel and cargo remain to this day at the bottom. Since that period the shoal at the entrance of the harbour has so extended itself in a westerly direction towards Peveril Point in Purbeck, that the navigable channel is thrown a mile nearer that Point.* The cause is obvious; the tidal current deposits the sediment with which it is charged around any object which checks its velocity. Matter also drifted along the bottom is arrested by any obstacle, and accumulates round it, just as the African sand-winds, before described, raise a small hillock over the carcass of every dead camel exposed on the surface of the desert.

---

* This account I received from the Honourable Chas. Harris.

I before alluded to an ancient Dutch vessel, discovered in the deserted channel of the river Rother, in Sussex, of which the oak wood was much blackened, but its texture unchanged.* The interior was filled with fluviatile silt, as was also the case in regard to a vessel discovered in a former bed of the Mersey, and another disinterred where the St. Katherine Docks are excavated in the alluvial plain of the Thames. In like manner many ships have been found preserved entire in modern strata, formed by the silting up of estuaries along the southern shores of the Baltic, especially in Pomerania. Between Bromberg and Nakel, for example, a vessel and two anchors in a very perfect state were dug up far from the sea.†

At the mouth of a river in Nova Scotia, a schooner of thirty-two tons, laden with live stock, was lying with her side to the tide, when the bore, or tidal wave, which rises there about ten feet in perpendicular height, rushed into the estuary and overturned the vessel, so that it instantly disappeared. After the tide had ebbed, the schooner was so totally buried in the sand, that the taffrel or upper rail over the stern was alone visible.‡ We are informed by Leigh, that on draining Martin Meer, a lake eighteen miles in circumference, in Lancashire, a bed of marl was laid dry, wherein no fewer than eight canoes were found imbedded. In figure and dimensions they were not unlike those now used in America. In a morass about nine miles distant from this Meer a whetstone and an axe of mixed metal were dug up.* In Ayrshire also, three canoes were found in Loch Doon some few years ago; and during the year 1831 four others, each hewn out of separate oak trees. They were twenty-three feet in length, two and a half in depth, and nearly four feet in breadth at the stern. In the mud which filled one of them was found a war-club of oak and a stone battle-axe. A canoe of oak was also found in 1820, in peat overlying the shell-marl of the Loch of Kinnordy in Forfarshire.†

---

* Vol. II. p. 42. † Von Hoff, vol. i. p. 368.

‡ Silliman's Geol. Lectures, p. 78., who cites Penn.

*Manner in which ships may be preserved in a deep sea.* — It is extremely possible that the submerged woodwork of ships which have sunk where the sea is two or three miles deep has undergone greater chemical changes in an equal space of time, than in the cases above mentioned; for the experiments of Scoresby show that wood may at certain depths be impregnated in a single hour with salt-water, so that its specific gravity is entirely altered. It may often happen that hot springs charged with carbonate of lime, silex, and other mineral ingredients, may issue at great depths, in which case every pore of the vegetable tissue may be injected with the lapidifying liquid, whether calcareous or siliceous, before the smallest decay commences. The conversion also of wood into lignite is probably more rapid under enormous pressure. But the change of the timber into lignite or coal would not prevent the original form of a ship from being distinguished; for, as we find in strata of the carboniferous era, the bark of the hollow reed-like trees converted into coal, and the central cavity filled with sandstone, so might we trace the outline of a ship in coal; while in the indurated mud, sandstone, or limestone, filling the interior, we might discover instruments of human art, ballast consisting of rocks foreign to the rest of the stratum, and other contents of the ship.

---

* Leigh's Lancashire, p. 17., A.D. 1700.

† Geol. Trans., second ser., vol. ii. p. 87.

*Submerged metallic substances.*—Many of the metallic substances which fall into the waters probably lose, in the course of ages, the forms artificially imparted to them; but under certain circumstances these may be preserved for indefinite periods. The cannon inclosed in a calcareous rock, drawn up from the delta of the Rhone, which is now in the museum at Montpellier, might probably have endured as long as the calcareous matrix; but even if the metallic matter had been removed, and had entered into new combinations, still a mould of its original shape would have been left, corresponding to those impressions of shells which we see in rocks, from which all the carbonate of lime has been subtracted. About the year 1776, says Mr. King, some fishermen, sweeping for anchors in the Gull stream (a part of the sea near the Downs), drew up a very curious old swivel gun, near eight feet in length. The barrel, which was about five feet long, was of brass; but the handle by which it was traversed was about three feet in length, and the swivel and pivot on which it turned were of iron. Around these latter were formed incrustations of sand converted into a kind of stone, of an exceedingly strong texture and firmness; whereas round the barrel of the gun, except where it was near adjoining to the iron, there was no such incrustation, the greater part of it being clean, and in good condition, just as if it had still continued in use. In the incrusting stone, adhering to it on the outside, were a number of shells and corallines, "just as they are often found in a fossil state." These were all so strongly attached, that it required as much force to separate them from the matrix "as to break a fragment off any hard rock."*

In the year 1745, continues the same writer, the Fox man-of-war was stranded on the coast of East Lothian, and went to pieces. About thirty-three years afterwards a violent storm laid bare a part of the wreck, and threw up near the place several masses, "consisting of iron, ropes, and balls," covered over with ochreous sand, concreted and hardened into a kind of stone. The substance of the rope was very little altered. The consolidated sand retained perfect impressions of parts of an iron ring, "just as impressions of extraneous fossil bodies are found in various kinds of strata."†

After a storm, in the year 1824, which occasioned a considerable shifting of the sands near St. Andrew's, in Scotland, a gun-barrel of ancient construction was found, which is conjectured to have belonged to one of the wrecked vessels of the Spanish Armada. It is now in the museum of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland, and is incrusted over by a thin coating of sand, the grains of which are cemented by brown ferruginous matter. Attached to this coating are fragments of various shells, as of the common cardium, mya, &c.

---

* Phil. Trans., 1779.

† Ibid., vol. lxix., 1779.

Many other examples are recorded of iron instruments taken up from the bed of the sea near the British coasts, incased by a thick coating of conglomerate, consisting of pebbles and sand, cemented by oxide of iron.

Dr. Davy describes, a bronze helmet, of the antique Grecian form, taken up in 1825, from a shallow part of the sea, between the citadel of Corfu and the village of Castrades. Both the interior and exterior of the helmet were partially incrusted with shells, and a deposit of carbonate of lime. The surface generally, both under the incrustation, and where freed from it, was of a variegated colour, mottled with spots of green, dirty white, and red. On minute inspection with a lens, the green and red patches proved to consist of crystals of the red oxide and carbonate of copper, and the dirty white chiefly of oxide of tin.

The mineralizing process, says Dr. Davy, which has produced these new combinations, has, in general, penetrated very little into the substance of the helmet. The incrustation and rust removed, the metal is found bright beneath; in some places considerably corroded, in others very slightly. It proves, on analysis, to be copper, alloyed with 18·5 per cent. of tin. Its colour is that of our common brass, and it possesses a considerable degree of flexibility.

"It is a curious question," he adds, "how the crystals were formed in the helmet, and on the adhering calcareous deposit. There being no reason to suppose deposition from solution, are we not under the necessity of inferring, that the mineralizing process depends on a small motion and separation of the particles of the original compound? This motion may have been due to the operation of electro-chemical powers which may have separated the different metals of the alloy." *

### *Effects of the Subsidence of Land, in imbedding Cities and Forests in subaqueous Strata.*

We have hitherto considered the transportation of plants and animals from the land by *aqueous* agents, and their inhumation in lacustrine or submarine deposits, and we may now inquire what tendency the subsidence of tracts of land by *earthquakes* may have to produce analogous effects. Several examples of the sinking down of buildings, and portions of towns near the shore, to various depths beneath the level of the sea during subterranean movements, were before enumerated in treating of the changes brought about by *inorganic* causes. The events alluded to were comprised within a brief portion of the historical period, and confined to a small number of the regions of active volcanos. Yet these authentic facts, relating merely to the last century and a half, gave indications of considerable changes in the physical geography of the globe. If, during the earthquake of Jamaica, in 1692, some of the houses in Port Royal subsided, together with the ground they stood upon, to the depth of twenty-four, thirty-six, and forty-eight feet under water, we are not to suppose that this was the only spot throughout the whole range of the coasts of that island, or the bed of the surrounding sea, which suffered similar depressions. If the quay at Lisbon sunk at once to the depth of several hundred feet in 1755, we must not imagine that this was the only point on the shores of the peninsula where similar phenomena might have been witnessed.

---

* Phil. Trans. 1826, part ii. p. 55.

If, during the short period since South America has been colonized by Europeans, we have proof of alterations of level at the three principal ports on the western shores, Callao, Valparaiso, and Conception *, we cannot for a moment suspect that these cities, so distant from each other, have been selected as the peculiar points where the desolating power of the earthquake has expended its chief fury. "It would be a knowing arrow that could choose out the brave men from the cowards," retorted the young Spartan, when asked if his comrades who had fallen on the field of battle were braver than he and his fellow-prisoners; we might, in the same manner, remark that a geologist must attribute no small discrimination and malignity to the subterranean force, if he should suppose it to spare habitually a line of coast many thousand miles in length, with the exception of those few spots where populous towns have been erected. On considering how small is the area occupied by the seaports of this disturbed region,—points where alone each slight change of the relative level of the sea and land can be recognized, and reflecting on the proofs in our possession, of the local revolutions that have happened on the site of each port, within the last century and a half—our conceptions must be greatly exalted respecting the magnitude of the alterations which the country between the Andes and the sea may have undergone, even in the course of the last six thousand years.

*Cutch earthquake.*—The manner in which a large extent of surface may be submerged, so that the terrestrial plants and animals may be imbedded in subaqueous strata, cannot be better illustrated than by the earthquake of Cutch, in 1819, before alluded to.* It is stated, that, for some years after that earthquake, the withered tamarisks and other shrubs protruded their tops above the waves, in parts of the lagoon formed by subsidence, on the site of the village of Sindree and its environs; but, after the flood of 1826, they were seen no longer. Every geologist will at once perceive, that forests sunk by such subterranean movements may become imbedded in subaqueous deposits, both fluviatile and marine, and the trees may still remain erect, or sometimes the roots and part of the trunks may continue in their original position, while the current may have broken off, or levelled with the ground, their upper stems and branches.

---

* See Vol. II. pp. 231. 300. 302.

*Submarine forests.*—But, although a certain class of geological phenomena may be referred to the repetition of such catastrophes, we must hesitate before we call in to our aid the action of earthquakes, to explain what have been termed submarine forests, observed at various points around the shores of Great Britain. I have already hinted, that the explanation of some of these may be sought in the encroachments of the sea, in estuaries, and the varying level of the tides, at distant periods, on the same parts of our coast.† After examining, in 1829, the submarine forest as it is called of Happisborough, in Norfolk, I found that it was nothing more than a tertiary lignite; which becomes exposed in the bed of the sea as soon as the waves sweep away the superincumbent strata of blueish clay. So great has been the advance of the sea upon our eastern shores, within the last eight centuries, that whenever we find a mass of submerged timber near the sea-side, or at the foot of the existing cliffs, which we cannot suppose to be a mere accumulation of drift vegetable matter, we should endeavour to find a solution of the problem, by reference to any cause rather than an earthquake. For we can scarcely doubt that the present outline of our coast, the shape of its estuaries, and the formation of its cliffs, are of very modern date, probably within the historical era; whereas we have no reason whatever to imagine that this part of Europe has been agitated by subterranean convulsions, capable of altering the relative level of land and sea, at so recent a period.

---

* Vol. II. p. 237. † Vol. II. p. 27.

*In Scotland.*—It has been observed, by Dr. Fleming, that the roots of the trees, in several submarine forests in Scotland, are in lacustrine silt. The stumps of the trees evidently occupy the position in which they formerly grew, and are sometimes from eight to ten feet below high-water mark. The horizontality of the strata, and other circumstances, preclude the supposition of a slide; and the countries in question have been, from time immemorial, free from violent earthquakes, which might have produced subsidences. He has, therefore, attributed the depression, with much probability, to the drainage of peaty soil, on the removal of a seaward barrier. Suppose a lake, separated from the sea by a chain of sand hills, to become a marsh, and a stratum of vegetable matter to be formed on the surface, of sufficient density to support trees. Let the outlet of the marsh be elevated a few feet only above the rise of the tide. All the strata below the level of the outlet would be kept constantly wet, or in a semifluid state; but if the tides rise in the estuary, and the sea encroaches, portions of the gained lands are swept away, and the extremities of the alluvial and peaty strata, whereon the forest grew, are exposed to the sea, and at every ebb tide left dry to a depth equal to the increased fall of the tide. Much water, formerly prevented from escaping, now oozes out from the moist beds,—the strata collapse, and the surface of the morass, instead of remaining at its original height, sinks below the level of the sea.*

*Submarine forest on coast of Hants, how formed.* — Mr. Charles Harris discovered lately evident traces of a fir-wood, beneath the mean level of the sea, at Bournmouth, in Hampshire, the formation having been laid open during a low spring tide. It is composed of peat and wood, and is situated between the beach and a bar of sand about 200 yards off, and extends fifty yards along the shore. It also lies in the direct line of the Bournmouth Valley, from the termination of which it is separated by 200 yards of shingle and drift-sand. Down the valley flows a large brook, traversing near its mouth a considerable tract of rough, boggy, and heathy ground, which produces a few birch trees, and a great abundance of the Myrica gale. Seventy-six rings of annual growth were counted in a transverse section of one of the buried fir trees, which was fourteen inches in diameter. Besides the stumps and roots of fir, pieces of alder and birch are found in the peat; and it is a curious fact, that a part of many of the trees has been converted into iron pyrites. The peat rests on pebbly strata, precisely similar to the sand and pebbles occurring on the adjoining heaths.

---

* See Memoirs by the Rev. Dr. Fleming, Trans. R. S. Edin., vol. ix. p. 419.; and Quarterly Journ. of Sci., No. 13., new series.

As the sea is encroaching on this shore, we may suppose that at some former period the Bourne Valley extended farther, and that its extremity consisted, as at present, of boggy ground, partly clothed with fir-trees. The bog rested on that bed of pebbles which we now see below the peat; and the sea, in its progressive encroachments, eventually laid bare, at low water, the sandy foundations; upon which a stream of fresh water rushing through the sand at the fall of the tides, carried out loose sand with it. The superstratum of vegetable matter being matted and bound together by the roots of trees, remained; but being undermined, sank down below the level of the sea, and then the waves washed sand and shingle over it. In support of this hypothesis, it may be observed, that small streams of fresh water often pass under the sands of the sea-beach, so that they may be crossed dry-shod; and the water is seen, at the point where it issues, to carry out sand, and even pebbles.

*Buildings how preserved under water.* — Some of the buildings which have at different times subsided beneath the level of the sea have been immediately covered up to a certain extent with strata of volcanic matter showered down upon them. Such was the case at Tomboro in Sumbawa, in the present century, and at the site of the Temple of Serapis, in the environs of Puzzuoli, probably in the twelfth century. The entrance of a river charged with sediment in the vicinity may still more frequently occasion the rapid envelopment of buildings in regularly stratified formations. But if no foreign matter be introduced, the buildings, when once removed to a depth where the action of the waves is insensible, and where no great current happens to flow, may last for indefinite periods, and be as durable as the floor of the ocean itself, which may often be composed of the very same materials. There is no reason to doubt the tradition mentioned by the classic writers, that the submerged Grecian towns of Bura and Helice were seen under water; and I am informed by an eye-witness that eighty-eight years after the convulsion of 1692, the houses of Port Royal were still visible at the bottom of the sea.*

*Berkley's arguments for the recent date of the creation of man.* — I cannot conlude this chapter without recalling to the reader's mind a memorable passage written by Berkley a century ago, in which he inferred, on grounds which may be termed strictly geological, the recent date of the creation of man. "To any one," says he, "who considers that on digging into the earth, such quantities of shells, and in some places bones and horns of animals, are found sound and entire, after having lain there in all probability some thousands of years; it should seem probable that guns, medals, and implements in metal or stone might have lasted entire, buried under ground forty or fifty thousand years, if the world had been so old. How comes it then to pass that no remains are found, no antiquities of those numerous ages preceding the Scripture accounts of time; that no fragments of buildings, no public monuments, no intaglias, cameos, statues, basso-relievos, medals, inscriptions, utensils, or artificial works of any kind, are ever discovered, which may bear testimony to the existence of those mighty empires, those successions of monarchs, heroes, and demi-gods, for so many thousand years? Let us look forward and suppose ten or twenty thousand years to come, during which time we will suppose that plagues, famine, wars, and *earthquakes* shall have made great havoc in the world, is it not highly probable that at the end of such a period, pillars, vases, and statues now in being of granite, or porphyry, or jasper, (stones of such hardness as we know them to have lasted two thousand years above ground, without any considerable alteration,) would bear record of these and past ages? Or that some of our current coins might then be dug up, or old walls and the foundations of buildings show themselves, as well as the shells and stones of *the primeval world*, which are preserved down to our times."*

---

* Admiral Sir Charles Hamilton frequently saw the submerged houses of Port Royal in the year 1780, in that part of the harbour which lies between the town and the usual anchorage of men-of-war. Bryan Edwards also says, in his History of the West Indies (vol. i. p. 235., oct. ed., 3 vols. 1801,) that in 1793 the *ruins* were visible in clear weather from the boats which sailed over them.

That many signs of the agency of man would have lasted at least as long as "the shells of the primeval world," had our race been so ancient, we may feel as fully persuaded as Berkley; and we may anticipate with confidence that many edifices and implements of human workmanship, and the skeletons of men, and casts of the human form, will continue to exist when a great part of the present mountains, continents, and seas, have disappeared. Assuming the future duration of the planet to be indefinitely protracted, we can foresee no limit to the perpetuation of some of the memorials of man, which are continually entombed in the bowels of the earth or in the bed of the ocean, unless we carry forward our views to a period sufficient to allow the various causes of change, both igneous and aqueous, to remodel more than once the entire crust of the earth. *One* complete revolution will be inadequate to efface every monument of our existence; for many works of art might enter again and again into the formation of successive eras, and escape obliteration even though the very rocks in which they had been for ages imbedded were destroyed, just as pebbles included in the conglomerates of one epoch often contain the organized remains of beings which flourished during a prior era.

---

* Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher, vol. ii. pp. 84, 85. 1732.

Yet it is no less true, as a late distinguished philosopher has declared, "that none of the works of a mortal being can be eternal." * They are in the first place wrested from the hands of man, and lost as far as regards their subserviency to his use, by the instrumentality of those very causes which place them in situations where they are enabled to endure for indefinite periods. And even when they have been included in rocky strata, when they have been made to enter as it were into the solid framework of the globe itself, they must nevertheless eventually perish; for every year some portion of the earth's crust is shattered by earthquakes or melted by volcanic fire, or ground to dust by the moving waters on the surface. "The river of Lethe," as Bacon eloquently remarks, "runneth as well above ground as below." †

---

* Davy, Consolations in Travel, p. 276.

† Essay on the Vicissitude of Things.

# CHAPTER XVII.

## IMBEDDING OF AQUATIC SPECIES IN SUBAQUEOUS STRATA.

**Inhumation of fresh-water plants and animals — Shell marl — Fossilized seed-vessels and stems of chara — Recent deposits in American lakes — Fresh-water species drifted into seas and estuaries — Lewes levels — Alternations of marine and fresh-water strata, how caused — Imbedding of marine plants and animals (p. 288.) — Cetacea stranded on our shores — Liability of littoral and estuary testacea to be swept into the deep sea — Effects of a storm in the Firth of Forth — Burrowing shells secured from the ordinary action of waves and currents — Living testacea found at considerable depths — Extent of some recent shelly deposits.**

HAVING treated of the imbedding of terrestrial plants and animals, and of human remains, in deposits now forming beneath the waters, I come next to consider in what manner *aquatic* species may be entombed in strata formed in their own element.

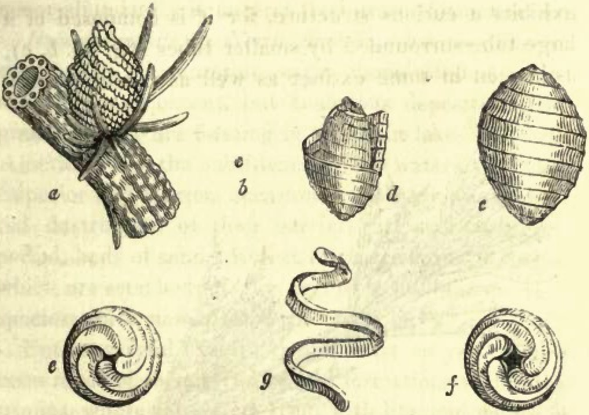
*Fresh-water plants and animals.* — The remains of species belonging to those genera of the animal and vegetable kingdoms which are more or less exclusively confined to fresh water are for the most part preserved in the beds of lakes or estuaries, but they are oftentimes swept down by rivers into the sea, and there intermingled with the exuviæ of marine races. The phenomena attending their inhumation in lacustrine deposits are sometimes revealed to our observation by the drainage of small lakes, such as are those in Scotland, which have been laid dry for the sake of obtaining shell marl for agricultural uses.

In these recent formations, as seen in Forfarshire, two or three beds of calcareous marl are sometimes observed separated from each other by layers of drift peat, sand, or fissile clay. The marl often consists almost entirely of an aggregate of shells of the genera limnea, planorbis, valvata, and cyclas, of species now existing in Scotland. A considerable proportion of the testacea appear to have died very young, and few of the shells are of a size which indicates their having attained a state of maturity. The shells are sometimes entirely decomposed, forming a pulverulent marl; sometimes in a state of good preservation. They are frequently intermixed with stems of charæ and other aquatic vegetables, the whole being matted together and compressed, forming laminæ often as thin as paper.

*Fossilized seed-vessels and stems of chara.*—As the chara is an aquatic plant, which occurs frequently fossil in formations of different eras, and is often of much importance to the geologist in characterizing entire groups of strata, I shall describe the manner in which I have found the recent species in a petrified state. They occur in a marl-lake in Forfarshire, inclosed in nodules, and sometimes in a continuous stratum of a kind of travertin.

The seed-vessel of these plants is remarkably tough and hard, and consists of a membranous nut covered by an integument (*d*, fig. 52.), both of which are spirally striated or ribbed. The integument is composed of five spiral valves, of a quadrangular form (*g*). In *Chara hispida*, which abounds in the lakes of Forfarshire, and which has become fossil in the Bakie Loch, each of the spiral valves of the seed-vessel turns rather more than twice round the circumference, the whole together making between ten and eleven rings. The number of these rings differs greatly in different species, but in the same appears to be very constant.

Fig. 52.

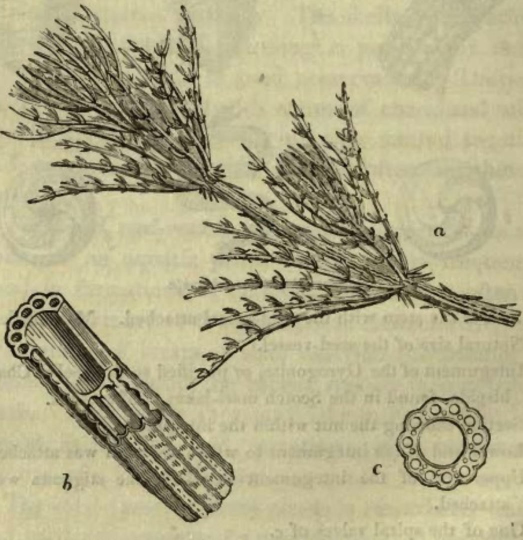


*Seed-vessel of Chara hispida.*

*a.* Part of the stem with the seed-vessel attached. Magnified.
*b.* Natural size of the seed-vessel.
*c.* Integument of the Gyrogonite, or petrified seed-vessel of Chara hispida, found in the Scotch marl-lakes. Magnified.
*d.* Section showing the nut within the integument.
*e.* Lower end of the integument to which the stem was attached.
*f.* Upper end of the integument to which the stigmata were attached.
*g.* One of the spiral valves of *c.*

The stems of charæ occur fossil in the Scotch marl in great abundance. In some species, as in *Chara hispida,* the plant when living contains so much carbonate of lime in its vegetable organization, independently of calcareous incrustation, that it effervesces strongly with acids when dry. The stems of *Chara hispida* are longitudinally striated, with a tendency to be spiral. These striæ, as appears to be the case with all charæ, turn always like the worm of a screw from right to left, while those of the seed-vessel wind round in a contrary direction. A cross section of the stem exhibits a curious structure, for it is composed of a large tube surrounded by smaller tubes (fig. 53. *b*, *c*), as is seen in some extinct as well as recent species.

Fig. 53.



*Stem and branches of Chara hispida.*

*a*. Stem and branches of the natural size.
*b*. Section of the stem magnified.
*c*. Showing the central tube surrounded by two rings of smaller tubes.

In the stems of several species, however, there is only a single tube.*

The valves of a small animal called cypris (*C. ornata?* Lam.) occur completely fossilized like the stems of charæ, in the Scotch travertin above mentioned. This cypris inhabits the lakes and ponds of England, where it is not uncommon. Species of the same genus also occur abundantly in ancient fresh-water formations.†

*Recent deposits in North American lakes.*—The recent strata of lacustrine origin above alluded to are of very small extent, but analogous deposits on the grandest scale are forming in the great lakes of North America. By the subsidence of the waters of Lakes Superior and Huron, occasioned probably by the partial destruction of their barriers at some unknown period, beds of sand 150 feet thick are exposed, below which are seen beds of clay, inclosing shells of the very species which now inhabit the lake.‡

But no careful examination appears as yet to have been made of recent fresh-water formations within the tropics, where the waters teem with life, and where in the bed of a newly drained lake the remains of the alligator, crocodile, tortoise, and perhaps some large fish, might be discovered.

### *Imbedding of fresh-water Species in Estuary aud Marine Deposits.*

*In Lewes levels.*—We have sometimes an opportunity of examining the deposits which within the historical period have silted up some of our estuaries; and excavations made for wells and other purposes, where the sea has been finally excluded, enable us to observe the state of the organic remains in these tracts. The valley of the Ouze between Newhaven and Lewes is one of several estuaries from which the sea has retired within the last seven or eight centuries; and here, as appears from the researches of Mr. Mantell, strata thirty feet and upwards in thickness have accumulated. At the top, beneath the vegetable soil, is a bed of peat about five feet thick, inclosing many trunks of trees. Next below is a stratum of blue clay containing fresh-water shells of about nine species, such as now inhabit the district. Intermixed with these was observed the skeleton of a deer. Lower down, the layers of blue clay contain, with the above-mentioned fresh-water shells, several marine species well known on our coast. In the lowest beds, often at the depth of thirty-six feet, these marine testacea occur without the slightest intermixture of fluviatile species, and amongst them the skull of the narwal, or sea unicorn (*Monodon monoceros*), has been detected. Underneath all these deposits is a bed of pipe-clay, derived from the subjacent chalk.*

---

* On Fresh-water Marl, &c. By C. Lyell. Geol. Trans., vol. ii., second series, p. 73.

† For figures of Cypris, see Book IV. chap. xvii.

‡ Dr. Bigsby, Journal of Science, &c. No. xxxvii. pp. 262, 263.

If we had no historical information respecting the former existence of an inlet of the sea in this valley, and of its gradual obliteration, the inspection of the section above described would show, as clearly as a written chronicle, the following sequence of events. First, there was a salt-water estuary peopled for many years by species of marine testacea identical with those now living, and into which some of the larger cetacea occasionally entered. Secondly, the inlet grew shallower, and the water became brackish, or alternately salt and fresh, so that the remains of fresh-water and marine shells were mingled in the blue argillaceous sediment of its bottom. Thirdly, the shoaling continued until the river-water prevailed, so that it was no longer habitable by marine testacea, but fitted only for the abode of fluviatile species and aquatic insects. Fourthly, a peaty swamp or morass was formed where some trees grew, or perhaps were drifted during floods, and where terrestrial quadrupeds were mired. Finally, the soil being flooded by the river only at distant intervals, became a verdant meadow.

---

* Mantell, Geol. of Sussex, p. 285.; also Catalogue of Org. Rem., Geol. Trans., vol. iii. part i. p. 201., second series.

*In delta of Ganges.* — It was before stated, that on the sea-coast, in the delta of the Ganges, there are eight great openings, each of which has evidently, at some ancient periods, served in its turn as the principal channel of discharge.* Now, as the base of the delta is 200 miles in length, it must happen that, as often as the great volume of river-water is thrown into the sea by a new mouth, the sea will at one point be converted from salt to fresh, and at another from fresh to salt; for, with the exception of those parts where the principal discharge takes place, the salt-water not only washes the base of the delta, but enters far into every creek and lagoon. It is evident, then, that repeated alternations of beds containing fresh-water shells, with others filled with corals and marine exuviæ, may here be formed; and each series may be of great thickness, as the sea on which the Gangetic delta gains is of considerable depth, and intervals of centuries elapse between each alteration in the course of the principal stream.

---

* Vol. I. p. 354.

*In delta of Indus.* — Analogous phenomena must sometimes be occasioned by such alternate elevation and depression of the land as was shown to be taking place in the delta of the Indus.* But the subterranean movements affect but a small number of the deltas formed at one period on the globe; whereas, the silting up of some of the arms of great rivers and the opening of others, and the consequent variation of the points where the chief volume of their waters is discharged into the sea, are phenomena common to almost every delta.

The variety of species of testacea contained in the recent calcareous marl of Scotland, before mentioned, is very small, but the abundance of individuals extremely great, a circumstance very characteristic of fresh-water formations in general as compared to marine; for in the latter, as is seen on sea-beaches, coral reefs, or in the bottom of seas examined by dredging, wherever the individual shells are exceedingly numerous, there rarely fails to be a vast variety of species.

### *Imbedding of the Remains of Marine Plants and Animals.*

*Marine plants.* — The large banks of drift sea-weed which occur on each side of the equator in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans were before alluded to.† These, when they subside, may often produce considerable beds of vegetable matter. In Holland, submarine peat is derived from fuci, and on parts of our own coast from *Zostera marina*. In places where algæ do not generate peat, they may nevertheless leave traces of their form imprinted on argillaceous and calcareous mud, as they are usually very tough in their texture.

---

* Vol. II. p. 237.

† Vol. III. p. 37.

*Cetacea.*—It is not uncommon for the larger cetacea, which can float only in a considerable depth of water, to be carried during storms or high tides into estuaries, or upon low shores, where, upon the retiring of high water, they are stranded. Thus a narwal (*Monodon monoceros*) was found on the beach near Boston in Lincolnshire, in the year 1800, the whole of its body buried in the mud. A fisherman going to his boat saw the horn and tried to pull it out, when the animal began to stir itself.* An individual of the common whale (*Balæna mysticetus*), which measured seventy feet, came ashore near Peterhead, in 1682. Many individuals of the genus Balænoptera have met the same fate. It will be sufficient to refer to those cast on shore near Burnt Island, and at Alloa, recorded by Sibbald and Neill. The other individual mentioned by Sibbald, as having come ashore at Boyne, in Banffshire, was probably a Razor-back. Of the genus Catodon (*Cachalot*) Ray mentions a large one stranded on the west coast of Holland in 1598, and the fact is also commemorated in a Dutch engraving of the time of much merit. Sibbald, too, records that a herd of Cachalots, upwards of 100 in number, were found stranded at Kairston, in Orkney. The dead bodies of the larger cetacea are sometimes found floating on the surface of the waters, as was the case with the immense whale exhibited in London in 1831. And the carcass of a sea-cow or Lamantine (*Halicora*) was, in 1785, cast ashore near Leith.

---

* Fleming's Brit. Animals, p. 37.; in which work may be seen many other cases enumerated.

To some accident of this kind, we may refer the position of the skeleton of a whale seventy-three feet long, which was found at Airthrey, on the Forth, near Alloa, imbedded in clay twenty feet higher than the surface of the highest tide of the river Forth at the present day. From the situation of the Roman station and causeways at a small distance from the spot, it is concluded that the whale must have been stranded there at a period prior to the Christian era.*

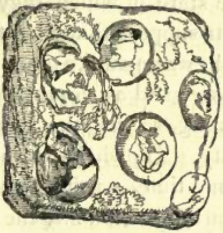
Other fossil remains of this class have also been found in estuaries, known to have been silted up in recent times, one example of which has been already mentioned near Lewes, in Sussex.

*Marine reptiles.* — Some singular fossils have lately been discovered in the island of Ascension in a stone said to be continually forming on the beach where the waves throw up small rounded fragments of shells and corals, which, in the course of time, become firmly agglutinated together and constitute a stone used largely for building and making lime. In a quarry on the N. W. side of the island, about 100 yards from the sea, some fossil eggs of turtles have been discovered in the hard rock thus formed. The eggs must have been nearly hatched at the time when they perished; for the bones of the young turtle are seen in the interior with their shape fully developed, the interstices between the bones being entirely filled with grains of sand, which are cemented together so that when the egg-shells are removed perfect casts of their form remain in stone. In the single specimen here figured

---

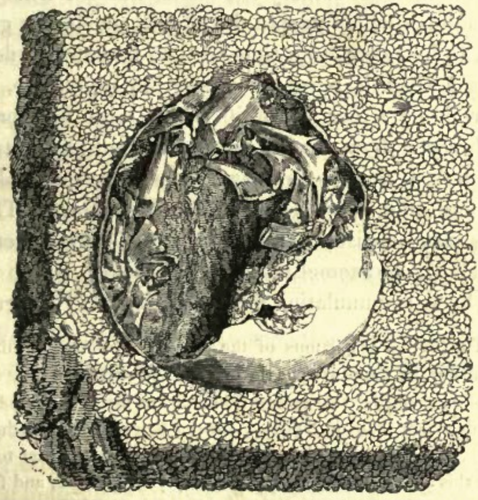
* Quart. Journ. of Lit. Sci., &c. No. 15. p. 172. Oct. 1819.

Fig. 54.



*Fossil eggs of Turtles from the Island of Ascension.**

Fig. 55.



*One of the eggs in Fig. 54. of the natural size, showing the bones of the fœtus which had been nearly hatched.*

---

* This specimen is in the possession of Mr. Carrier of the Geological Society of London.

(Fig. 54.), which is only five inches in its longest diameter, no less than seven eggs are preserved.*

To explain the state in which they occur fossil, it seems necessary to suppose that after the eggs were almost hatched in the warm sand, a great wave threw upon them so much more sand as to prevent the rays of the sun from penetrating, so that the yolk was chilled and deprived of vitality. The shells were perhaps slightly broken at the same time, so that small grains of sand might gradually be introduced into the interior by water as it percolated through the beach.

*Marine testacea.*—The aquatic animals and plants which inhabit an estuary are liable, like the trees and land animals which people the alluvial plains of a great river, to be swept from time to time far into the deep; for as a river is perpetually shifting its course, and undermining a portion of its banks with the forests which cover them, so the marine current alters its direction from time to time, and bears away the banks of sand and mud, against which it turns its force. These banks may consist in great measure of shells peculiar to shallow, and sometimes brackish water, which may have been accumulating for centuries, until at length they are carried away and spread out along the bottom of the sea, at a depth at which they could not have lived and multiplied. Thus littoral and estuary shells are more frequently liable even than fresh-water species, to be intermixed with the exuviæ of pelagic tribes.

---

* The most conspicuous of the bones represented within the shell in Fig. 55., appear to be the clavicle and coracoid bone. They are hollow; and for this reason resemble, at first sight, the bones of birds rather than of reptiles; for the latter have no medullary cavity. Mr. Owen, of the College of Surgeons, in order to elucidate this point, dissected for me a very young turtle, and found that the exterior portion only of the bones was ossified, the interior being still filled with cartilage. This cartilage soon dried up, and shrunk to a mere thread upon the evaporation of the spirits of wine in which the specimen had been preserved, so that in a short time the bones became as empty as those of birds.

After the storm of February 4. 1831, when several vessels were wrecked in the estuary of the Forth, the current was directed against a bed of oysters with such force, that great heaps of them were thrown *alive* upon the beach, and remained above high-water mark. I collected many of these oysters, as also the common eatable whelks (*buccina*), thrown up with them, and observed that, although still living, their shells were worn by the long attrition of sand which had passsd over them as they lay in their native bed, and which had evidently not resulted from the mere action of the tempest by which they were cast ashore.

From these facts we learn that the union of the two parts of a bivalve shell does not prove that it has not been transported to a distance; and when we find shells worn, and with all their prominent parts rubbed off, they may still have been imbedded where they grew.

*Burrowing shells.* — It sometimes appears extraordinary, when we observe the violence of the breakers on our coast, and see the strength of the current in removing cliffs, and sweeping out new channels, that many tender and fragile shells should inhabit the sea in the immediate vicinity of this turmoil. But a great number of the bivalve testacea, and many also of the turbinated univalves, burrow in sand or mud. The solen and the cardium, for example, which are usually found in shallow water near the shore, pierce through a soft bottom without injury to their shells; and the pholas can drill a cavity through mud of considerable hardness. The species of these and many other tribes can sink, when alarmed, with considerable rapidity, often to the depth of several feet, and can also penétrate upwards again to the surface, if a mass of matter be heaped upon them. The hurricane, therefore, may expend its fury in vain, and may sweep away even the upper part of banks of sand or mud, or may roll pebbles over them, and yet these testacea may remain below secure and uninjured.

*Shells become fossil at considerable depths.* — I have already stated that, at the depth of 950 fathoms, between Gibraltar and Ceuta, Captain Smyth found a gravelly bottom, with fragments of broken shells, carried thither probably from the comparatively shallow parts of the neighbouring straits, through which a powerful current flows. Beds of shelly sand might here, in the course of ages, be accumulated several thousand feet thick. But, without the aid of the drifting power of a current, shells may accumulate in the spot where they live and die, at great depths from the surface, if sediment be thrown down upon them; for even in our own colder latitudes, the depths at which living marine animals abound is very considerable. Captain Vidal ascertained, by soundings lately made off Tory Island, on the north-west coast of Ireland, that crustacea, star-fish, and testacea, occurred at various depths between fifty and one hundred fathoms; and he drew up dentalia from the mud of Galway bay in 230 and 240 *fathoms* water.

The same hydrographer discovered on the Rockall bank large quantities of shells at depths varying from 45 to 190 fathoms. These shells were for the most part pulverized, and evidently recent, as they retained their bright colours. In the same region a bed of fish-bones was observed extending for two miles along the bottom of the sea in eighty and ninety fathoms water. At the eastern extremity also of Rockall bank fish-bones were met with, mingled with pieces of fresh shell, at the depth of 235 fathoms.

Analogous formations are in progress in the submarine tracts extending from the Shetland Isles to the north of Ireland, wherever soundings can be procured. A continuous deposit of sand and mud, replete with broken and entire shells, echini, &c., has been traced for upwards of twenty miles to the eastward of the Faroe Islands, usually at the depth of from forty to one hundred fathoms. In one part of this tract (long. 6° 30′, lat. 61° 50′) fish-bones occur in extraordinary profusion, so that the lead cannot be drawn up without some vertebræ being attached. This "bone bed," as it was called by our surveyors, is three miles and a half in length, and forty-five fathoms under water, and contains a few shells intermingled with the bones.

In the British seas, the shells and other organic remains lie in soft mud or loose sand and gravel; whereas, in the bed of the Adriatic, Donati found them frequently inclosed in stone of recent origin. This is precisely the difference in character which we might have expected to exist between the British marine formations now in progress, and those of the Adriatic; for calcareous and other mineral springs abound in the Mediterranean and lands adjoining, while they are almost entirely wanting in our own country.

During his survey of the west coast of Africa, Captain Belcher found, by frequent soundings between the twenty-third and twentieth degrees of north latitude, that the bottom of the sea, at the depth of from twenty to about fifty fathoms, consists of sand with a great intermixture of shells, often entire, but sometimes finely comminuted. Between the eleventh and ninth degrees of north latitude, on the same coast, at soundings varying from twenty to about eighty fathoms, he brought up abundance of corals and shells mixed with sand. These also were in some parts entire, and in others worn and broken.

In all these cases, it is only necessary that there should be some deposition of sedimentary matter, however minute, such as may be supplied by rivers draining a continent, or currents preying on a line of cliffs, in order that stratified formations, hundreds of feet in thickness, and replete with organic remains, should result in the course of ages.

But, although some deposits may thus extend continuously for a thousand miles or more near certain coasts, the greater part of the bed of the ocean, remote from continents and islands, may very probably receive, at the same time, no new accessions of drift matter, all sediment being intercepted by intervening hollows. Erroneous theories in geology may be formed not only from overlooking the great extent of simultaneous deposits now in progress, but also from the assumption that such formations may be universal or coextensive with the bed of the ocean.*

---

* See Book iv. chap. 3., where this subject is discussed more fully.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## FORMATION OF CORAL REEFS.

**Reefs not formed in deep sea—Composed partly of shells—Conversion of a reef into an island—Extent and thickness of coral formations — The Maldiva Isles — Rate of growth of coral — its geological importance — Circular and. oval forms of coral islands (p. 306.) — Lagoons — causes of their peculiar configuration — Why the windward side higher than the leeward (p. 312.) — Stratification — That the subsidence by earthquakes in the Pacific exceeds the elevation — Henderson's Island — Coral on a high mountain in Otaheite (p. 318.)—Coral and shell limestones now in progress — The hypothesis that the quantity of calcareous matter has been and is still on the increase, considered.**

The powers of the organic creation in modifying the form and structure of those parts of the earth's crust which may be said to be undergoing repair, or where new rock-formations are continually in progress, are most conspicuously displayed in the labours of the coral animals. We may compare the operation of these zoophytes in the ocean to the effects produced on a smaller scale upon the land, by the plants which generate peat. In the case of the Sphagnum, the upper part vegetates while the lower portion is entering into a mineral mass, in which the traces of organization remain when life has entirely ceased. In corals, in like manner, the more durable materials of the generation that has passed away serve as the foundation on which living animals are continuing to rear a similar structure.

The stony part of the zoophyte may be likened to an internal skeleton; for it is surrounded by a soft animal substance capable of expanding itself, and when alarmed of contracting and drawing itself almost entirely into the hollows of the hard coral. Although oftentimes beautifully coloured in their own element, the soft parts become when taken from the sea nothing more in appearance than a brown slime spread over the stony nucleus.*

It was the opinion of the German naturalist Forster, in 1780, after his voyage round the world with Captain Cook, that coral animals had the power of building up steep and almost perpendicular walls from great depths in the sea, a notion afterwards adopted by Captain Flinders and others; but it is now very generally agreed that these zoophytes cannot live in water of great depths, and can only encrust the tops of submarine mountains with a calcareous covering a few fathoms thick.

These views have been confirmed by Ehrenberg, who has lately devoted more than a year to the examination of the corals of the Red Sea; but at the same time it must be remembered that strata of broken corals may accumulate to almost any thickness in the course of ages in the deep sea near the base of submarine mountains.

*Composition of coral reefs.* — The calcareous masses usually termed coral reefs are by no means exclusively the work of zoophytes; a great variety of shells, and, among them, some of the largest and heaviest of known species, contribute to augment the mass. In the south Pacific, great beds of oysters, mussels, *pinnæ marinæ*, and other shells, cover in profusion almost every reef; and, on the beach of coral islands, are seen the shells of echini and broken fragments of crustaceous animals. Large shoals of fish are also discernible through the clear blue water, and their teeth and hard palates are probably preserved, although a great portion of their soft cartilaginous bones decay.

---

* Ehrenberg, Nat. und Bild. der Coralleninseln, &c., Berlin, 1834.

Of the numerous species of zoophytes which are engaged in the production of coral banks, some of the most common belong to the Lamarckian genera Meandrina, Caryophyllia, Madrepora, Porites, and Astrea, but especially the latter.

*How converted into islands.* — In the Pacific the reefs, which just raise themselves above the level of the sea, are usually of a circular or oval form, and surrounded by a deep and often unfathomable ocean. In the centre of each, there is usually a comparatively shallow lagoon, where there is still water, and on the borders of which, sometimes 100 fathoms deep, the smaller and more delicate kind of zoophytes find a tranquil abode, while the hardier species live on the exterior margin of the islet, where a great surf usually breaks. When the reef, says M. Chamisso, a naturalist who accompanied Kotzebue, is of such a height that it remains almost dry at low water, the corals leave off building. A continuous mass of solid stone is seen composed of the shells of molluscs and echini, with their broken-off prickles and fragments of coral, united by calcareous sand, produced by the pulverization of shells. Fragments of coral limestone are thrown up by the waves, until the ridge becomes so high that it is covered only during some seasons of the year by the high tides. The heat of the sun often penetrates the mass of stone when it is dry, so that it splits in many places. The force of the waves is thereby enabled to separate and lifts blocks of coral, frequently six feet long and three or four in thickness, and throw them upon the reef. "After this the calcareous sand lies undisturbed, and offers to the seeds of trees and plants cast upon it by the waves a soil upon which they rapidly grow, to overshadow its dazzling white surface. Entire trunks of trees, which are carried by the rivers from other countries and islands, find here, at length, a resting place after their long wanderings: with these come some small animals, such as lizards and insects, as the first inhabitants. Even before the trees form a wood, the sea-birds nestle here; strayed land-birds take refuge in the bushes; and, at a much later period, when the work has been long since completed, man appears, and builds his hut on the fruitful soil." *

In the above description the solid stone is stated to consist of shell and coral united by sand; but masses of very compact limestone are also found even in the uppermost and newest parts of the reefs, such as could only have been produced by chemical precipitation. It is suggested that in these instances the carbonate of lime may have been derived from the decomposition of corals and testacea; for when the animal matter undergoes putrefaction, the calcareous residuum must be set free under circumstances very favourable to pre-

---

* Kotzebue's Voyages, 1815–18, vol. iii. pp. 331—333.

cipitation, especially when there are other calcareous substances, such as shells and corals, on which it may be deposited. Thus organic bodies may be inclosed in a solid cement, and become portions of rocky masses.*

Lieutenant Nelson states that in the Bermuda islands the reefs assume the form of the bottom of the sea, on which they rest; and among every variety of configuration it happens here and there that zones of coral inclose tranquil basins, within which the decomposition of numerous zoophytes produces a soft white calcareous mud resembling chalk. Some of this dried mud, now in the museum of the Geological Society, is not distinguishable from some of the common soft chalk of England. In the same islands, also, several varieties of compact limestone are formed. Amongst other fossil bodies inclosed in the coral sandstones of this group are marine and terrestrial shells, corals, the hard parts of crabs, and the bones of birds.†

*Extent and thickness.*—The Pacific Ocean, throughout a space comprehended between the thirtieth parallel of latitude on each side of the equator, is extremely productive of coral; as also are the Arabian and Persian Gulfs. Coral is also abundant in the sea between the coast of Malabar and the island of Madagascar. Flinders describes an unbroken reef, 350 miles in length, on the east coast of New Holland; and, between that country and New Guinea, Captain P. King found the coral formations to extend throughout a distance of 700 miles, interrupted by no intervals exceeding thirty miles in length.

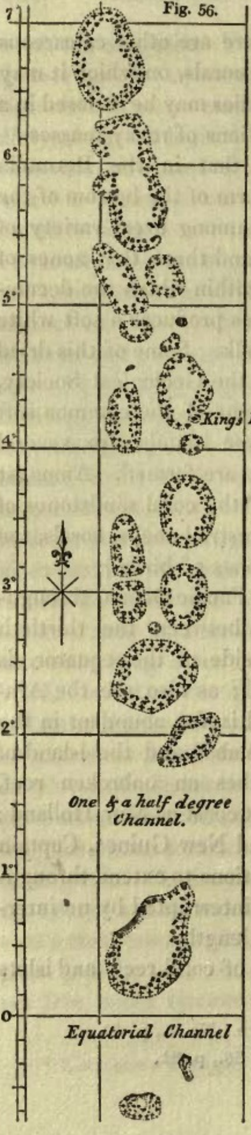
*Maldiva Isles.*—The chain of coral reefs and islets

---

* Stutchbury, West of Eng. Journ., No. 1., p. 50.

† Proceedings of Geol. Soc., No. 36., p. 81.

Fig. 56.



called the Maldivas, situated in the Indian Ocean, to the south-west of Malabar, form a chain 480 geographical miles in length, running due north and south. It is composed throughout of a series of circular assemblages of islets, the larger groups being from forty to fifty miles in their longest diameter. Captain Horsburgh, whose chart of these islands is subjoined, informs me, that outside of each circle or atoll, as it is termed, there are coral reefs sometimes extending to the distance of two or three miles, beyond which there are no soundings at immense depths. But in the centre of each atoll there is a lagoon from fifteen to twenty fathoms deep. In the channels between the atolls, no soundings have been obtained at the depth of 150 fathoms.

*Laccadive Islands.* — The Laccadive islands run in the same line with the Maldivas, on the north, as do the isles of the Chagos Archipelago, on the south; so that these may be continuations of the same chain of submarine mountains, crested in a similar manner by coral limestones. Possibly they may all be the summits of volcanos; for, if Java and Sumatra were submerged, they would give rise to a somewhat similar shape in the bottom of the sea; since the volcanos of those islands observe a linear direction, and are often separated from each other by intervals, corresponding to those between the atolls of the Maldivas; and as they rise to various heights, from five to ten thousand feet above their base, they might leave an unfathomable ocean in the intermediate spaces.

In regard to the thickness of the masses of coral, MM. Quoy and Gaimard are of opinion, that the species which contribute most actively to the formation of solid masses do not grow where the water is deeper than twenty-five or thirty feet; but other competent observers declare that they reach to the depth of ninety feet, and even more.* The branched madrepores live at the greatest depths, and may form the first foundation of a reef, and raise a platform on which other species may build.†

*Rate of the growth of coral.* — The rapidity of the growth of coral is by no means great, according to the report of the natives to Captain Beechey. In an island west of Gambier's group, our navigators observed the *Chama gigas* (Tridacna, Lam.), while the animal was yet living, so completely overgrown by coral, that a space only of two inches was left for the extremity of the shell to open and shut.‡ But conchologists suppose that the chama may require thirty years or more to attain its full size, so that the fact is quite consistent with a very slow rate of increase in the calcareous reefs.

---

* Stutchbury, West of England Journ., No. 1. p. 47.

† Journ. of Roy. Geograph. Soc. of London, 1831, p. 218.

‡ Beechey's Voyage to the Pacific, &c., p. 157.

At the island called Taaopoto, in the South Pacific, the anchor of a ship wrecked about fifty years before was observed in seven fathom water still preserving its original form, but entirely encrusted by coral.* An oyster, which cannot have been more than two years old when taken, is preserved in the museum of the Bristol Institution, enveloped by a dense coral, a species of *Agaricia*, weighing 2 lb. 9 oz.†

In Captain Beechey's late expedition to the Pacific, no positive information could be obtained of any channel having been filled up within a given period; and it seems established, that several reefs had remained, for more than half a century, at about the same depth from the surface.

Ehrenberg also questions the fact of channels and harbours having been closed up in the Red Sea by the rapid increase of coral limestone. He supposes the notion to have arisen from the circumstance of havens having been occasionally filled up in some places with coral sand, in others with large quantities of ballast of coral rock thrown down from vessels. The same observer saw single corals of the genera Meandrina and Favia, having a globular form, from six to nine feet in diameter, which he imagines to be of immense antiquity, so that Pharaoh, he thinks, may have looked upon these same individuals in the Red Sea.‡

They certainly prove, as he remarks, that the reef on which they grow has increased at a very slow rate. After collecting more than 100 species, he found none of them covered with parasitic zoophytes, nor any instance of a living coral growing on another living coral. To this repulsive power which they exert whilst living against all others of their own class, we owe the beautiful symmetry of some large Meandrinæ and other species which adorn our museums. Yet balani and serpulæ can attach themselves to corals, and holes are excavated in them by saxicavous mollusca.* The natives of the Bermuda Islands point out certain corals now growing in the sea, which, according to tradition, have been living in the same spots for centuries. It is supposed that they may vie in age with the most ancient trees of Europe.

---

* Stutchbury, West of England Journ., No. 1. p. 49.

† Ibid., p. 51.

‡ Ehrenberg, as before cited, p. 41.

But, when we admit the increase of coral limestone to be slow, we are merely speaking with relation to the periods of human observation. It often happens that parasitic testacea live and die on the shells of the larger slow-moving gasteropods in the South Seas, and become entirely inclosed in an incrustation of compact limestone, while the animal, to whose habitation they are attached, crawls about, and bears upon his back these shells, which may be considered as already fossilized. It is, therefore, probable, that the reefs increase as fast as is compatible with the thriving state of the organic beings which chiefly contribute to their formation ; and, if the rate of augmentation thus implied be called, in conformity to our ordinary ideas of time, gradual and slow, it does not diminish, in the least degree, the geological importance of such calcareous masses.

Suppose the ordinary growth of coral limestone to amount to six inches in a century, it will then require

---

* Ehrenberg, as above cited, p. 42.

3,000 years to produce a reef fifteen feet thick: but have we any ground for presuming, that, at the end of that period, or of ten times thirty centuries, there will be a failure in the supply of lime, or that the polyps and molluscs will cease to act, or that the hour of the dissolution of our planet will first arrive, as the earlier geologists were fain to anticipate?

Instead of contemplating the brief annals of human events, let us turn to some natural chronometers; to the volcanic isles of the Pacific, for example, which shoot up 10,000 feet or more above the level of the ocean. These islands bear evident marks of having been produced by successive volcanic eruptions; and coral reefs are sometimes found on the volcanic soil, reaching for some distance from the sea-shore into the interior. When we consider the time required for the accumulation of such mountain masses of igneous matter, according to the analogy of known volcanic agency, all idea of extenuating the comparative magnitude of coral limestones, on the ground of the slowness of the operations of lithogenous polyps, must instantly vanish.

*Form of coral islands.* — The information collected during the late expedition to the Pacific, throws much additional light on the peculiarities of form and structure of coral islands. Of thirty-two of these, examined by Captain Beechey, the largest was thirty miles in diameter, and the smallest less than a mile. They were of various shapes, all formed of living coral, except one, which, although of coral formation, was raised about eighty feet above the level of the sea, and encompassed by a reef of living coral. * All were increasing their dimensions by the active operations of the lithophytes, which appeared to be gradually extending and bringing the immersed parts of their structure to the surface. Twenty-nine of the number had lagoons in their centres, which had probably existed in the others, until they were filled, in the course of time, by zoophytic and other substances.

---

* This islet is called Henderson's, see p. 316.

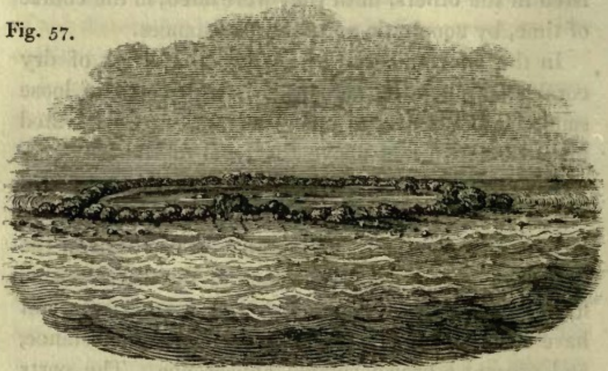
In the above-mentioned islands, the strips of dry coral encircling the lagoons, when divested of loose sandy materials heaped upon them, are rarely elevated more than two feet above the level of the sea; and, were it not for the abrupt descent of the external margin which causes the sea to break upon it, these strips would be wholly inundated. Those parts of the strip which are beyond the reach of the waves are no longer inhabited by the animals that reared them, but have their cells filled with a hard calcareous substance, and present a brown rugged appearance. The parts which are still immersed, or which are dry only at low water, are intersected by small channels, and are so full of hollows, that the tide, as it recedes, leaves small lakes of water upon them. The width of the plain, or strip of dead coral, in the islands which fell under Captain Beechey's observation, in no instance exceeded half a mile from the usual wash of the sea to the edge of the lagoon, and, in general, was only about three or four hundred yards.* Beyond these limits the sides of the island descend rapidly, apparently by a succession of inclined ledges, each terminating in a precipice. The depth of the lagoons is various; in some, entered by Captain Beechey, it was from twenty to thirty-eight fathoms.

*Whitsunday Island.* — In the annexed cut (Fig. 57.), one of these circular islands is represented just rising above the waves, covered with the cocoa-nut and other trees, and inclosing within a lagoon of tranquil water.

---

* Captain Beechey, part i. p. 188.

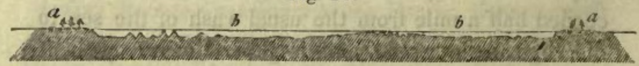
Fig. 57.



*View of Whitsunday Island.**

*Sections of coral isles.* — The accompanying section will enable the reader to comprehend the usual form of such islands. (Fig. 58.)

Fig. 58.



*Section of a Coral Island.*

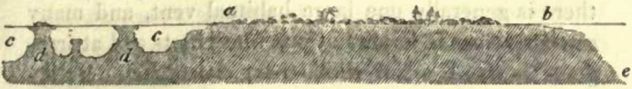
*a a.* Habitable part of the island, consisting of a strip of coral, inclosing the lagoon. *b b.* The lagoon.

The subjoined cut (Fig. 59.) exhibits a small part of the section of a coral island on a larger scale.

---

* This plate and the section which follows are copied, by permission of Captain Beechey, from the illustrations of his valuable work before alluded to.

Fig. 59.



*Section of part of a Coral Island.*

*a b.* Habitable part of the island.

*b e.* Slope of the side of the island, plunging at an angle of forty-five to the depth of fifteen hundred feet.

*c c.* Part of the lagoon.

*d d.* Knolls of coral in the lagoon, with overhanging masses of coral, resembling the capitals of columns.

*Origin of their peculiar configuration.*—The circular or oval forms of the numerous coral isles of the Pacific, with the lagoons in their centre, naturally suggest the idea that they are nothing more than the crests of submarine volcanos, having the rims and bottoms of their craters overgrown by coral. This opinion is strengthened by the conical form of the submarine mountain, and the steep angle at which it plunges on all sides into the surrounding ocean. It is also well known that the Pacific is a great theatre of volcanic action, and every island yet examined in the wide region termed Eastern Oceanica, consists either of volcanic rocks or coral limestones.

It has also been observed that although, within the circular coral reefs, there is usually nothing discernible but a lagoon, the bottom of which is covered with coral, yet within some of these basins, as in Gambier's group, rocks composed of porous lava, and other volcanic substances, rise up, resembling the two Kamenis and other eminences of igneous origin, which have been thrown up within the times of history, in the midst of the Gulf of Santorin.*

---

* See Vol. II. p. 208.

It has been mentioned that, in volcanic archipelagos there is generally one large habitual vent, and many smaller volcanos formed at different points and at irregular intervals, all of which have usually a linear arrangement. Now, in several of the groups of Eastern Oceanica there appears to be a similar disposition; the great islands, such as Otaheite, Owhyhee, and Terra del Spirito Santo, being habitual vents, and the lines of small circular coral isles, which are dependent on them, being very probably trains of minor volcanos, which may have been in eruption singly and at irregular intervals.

The absence of circular groups in the West Indian seas, and the tropical parts of the Atlantic, where corals are numerous, has been adduced as an additional argument, inasmuch as volcanic vents, though existing in those regions, are very inferior in importance to those in the Pacific and Indian oceans.* We are also informed by Ehrenberg, that all the banks of coral in the Red Sea, some of which are square, but most of them ribbon-like strips, have flat summits, and are without lagoons; a fact which seems to demonstrate that the stonemaking zoophytes do not of themselves build circular islets with a central cup-shaped cavity. It may be objected that the circles formed by some coral reefs or groups of coral islets, varying as they do from ten to thirty miles and upwards in diameter, are so great as to preclude the idea of their being volcanic craters. In regard to this objection, I may refer to what I have said in a former volume respecting the size of the so-called craters of elevation, many of which are, probably, the ruins of truncated cones.†

---

* De la Beche, Geol. Man., p. 141. first ed.

† See Vol. II. p. 216.

*Openings into the lagoons.*—There is yet another phenomenon attending the circular reefs, to which I have not alluded, viz., the deep narrow passage which almost invariably leads from the sea into the lagoon, and is kept open by the efflux of the sea at low tides. It is sufficient that a reef should rise a few feet above low-water mark to cause the waters to collect in the lagoon at high tide, and, when the sea falls, to rush out violently at one or more points where the reef happens to be lowest or weakest. At first there are probably many openings; but the growth of the coral tends to obstruct all those which do not serve as the principal channels of discharge; so that their number is gradually reduced to a few, and often finally to one. This event is strictly analogous to that witnessed in our estuaries, where a body of salt water accumulated during the flow issues with great velocity at the ebb of the tide, and scours out or keeps open a deep passage through the bar, which is almost always formed at the mouth of a river.

In controverting Von Buch's theory of " elevation craters," I mentioned, that a single deep gorge is described as always connecting the central cavity of such craters with the sea. The origin of this channel may be sought in the action of the tides, which may, in many cases, afford a satisfactory explanation. Suppose a volcanic cone, having a deep crater, to be at at first submarine, and to be then *gradually* elevated by earthquakes in an ocean where tides prevail, a ravine may be cut like that which penetrates into the Caldera of the isle of Palma. The opening would at first be made on that side where the rim of the crater was originally lowest, and it would afterwards be deepened as the island rose, so as always to descend somewhat lower than the level of the sea.

In the coral reefs surrounding those volcanic islands in the Pacific, which are large enough to feed small rivers, there is generally an opening or channel opposite the point where the stream of fresh water enters the sea. The depth of these channels rarely exceeds twenty-five feet; and they may be attributed, says Captain Beechey, to the aversion of the lithophytes to fresh water, and to the probable absence of the mineral matter of which they construct their habitations.*

*Why the windward side highest.*—But there is yet another peculiarity of the low coral islands in the Pacific, the explanation of which is by no means so obvious. They follow one general rule in having their windward side higher and more perfect than the other. "At Gambier and Matilda islands this inequality is very conspicuous, the weather side of both being wooded, and of the former inhabited, while the other sides are from twenty to thirty feet under water; where, however, they may be perceived to be equally *narrow* and well defined. It is on the leeward side also that the entrances into the lagoons occur; and although they may sometimes be situated on a side that runs in the direction of the wind, as at Bow Island, yet there are none to windward." These observations of Captain Beechey accord perfectly with those first made by Flinders on the Australian reefs, and which Captain Horsburgh, and other hydrographers, have made in regard to the coral islands of other seas. Thus the Chagos Isles in the Indian Ocean are chiefly of a horse-shoe form, the openings being to the northwest; whereas the prevailing wind blows regularly from the south-east. From this fortunate circumstance ships can enter and sail out again with ease; whereas, if the narrow inlets were to windward, vessels which once entered might not succeed for months in making their way out again. The well-known security of many of these harbours depends entirely on this fortunate peculiarity in their structure.

---

* Voyage to the Pacific, &c., p. 194.

In what manner is this singular conformation to be accounted for? The action of the waves is seen to be the cause of the superior elevation of some reefs on their windward sides, where sand and large masses of coral rock are thrown up by the breakers; but there is a variety of cases where this cause alone is inadequate to solve the problem; for reefs submerged at considerable depths, where the movements of the sea cannot exert much power, have, nevertheless, the same conformation, the leeward being much lower than the windward side.*

I am informed by Captain King, that, on examining the reefs called Rowley Shoals, which lie off the north-west coast of Australia, where the east and west monsoons prevail alternately, he found the open side of one crescent-shaped reef, the Impérieuse, turned to the east, and of another, the Mermaid, turned to the west; while a third oval reef, of the same group, was entirely submerged. This want of conformity is exactly what we should expect, where the winds vary periodically.

It seems impossible to refer the phenomenon now under consideration to any original uniformity in the configuration of submarine volcanos, on the summits of which we may suppose the coral reefs to grow; for although it is very common for craters to be broken down on one side only, we cannot imagine any cause that should breach them all in the same direction. But, the difficulty will, perhaps, be removed, if we call in another part of the volcanic agency — subsidence by earthquakes. Suppose the windward barrier to have been raised by the mechanical action of the waves to the height of two or three yards above the wall on the leeward side, and then the whole island to sink down a few fathoms, the appearances described would then be presented by the submerged reef. A repetition of such operations, by the alternate elevation and depression of the same mass (an hypothesis strictly conformable to analogy), might produce still greater inequality in the two sides, especially as the violent efflux of the tide has probably a strong tendency to check the accumulation of the more tender corals on the leeward reef; while the action of the breakers contributes to raise the windward barrier.

---

* Voyage to the Pacific, &c., p. 189.

In the Red Sea the banks of coral are, for the most part, only seen when the tide is out. Neither in the submerged banks, nor in such coral islets as are slightly elevated above the sea, is the windward side higher than the leeward, or that which is towards the coast, and protected from the breakers. The prevailing wind there is from the north.*

*Stratification of coral formations.* — The calcareous formations of the Pacific are probably all stratified, although single beds may sometimes attain a great thickness. The occasional drifting of sand from the exposed parts of a reef into the lagoon or the surrounding sea, would suffice to form occasional lines of partition, especially during violent tempests, which occur annually among the South Sea Islands. The decomposition of felspathic lavas may supply the current which washes and undermines the cliffs of some islands with fine clay; and this may be carried to great distances and deposited in distinct layers between calcareous masses, or may be mingled with them and form argillaceous limestones. Other divisions will arise from the arrangement of different species of testacea and zoophytes, which inhabit water of various depths, and which succeed each other as the sea is deepened by the fall of its bed during earthquakes, or in proportion as it grows shallower by elevation due to the same cause, or by the accumulation of organic substances raising the bottom.

---

* Ehrenberg, as before cited, p. 29.

To these causes of minor subdivision must be added another of great importance — the ejection of volcanic ashes and sand, often carried by the wind over wide areas, and the flowing of horizontal sheets of lava, which may interrupt suddenly the growth of one coral reef, and afterwards serve as a foundation for another. An example of this kind is seen in the Isle of France, where a bed of coral, ten feet thick, intervenes between two currents of lava*; and in the West Indies, in the island of Dominica, Maclure observes, that "a bed of coral and madrepore limestone, with shells, lies horizontally on a bed of cinders, about two or three hundred feet above the level of the sea, at Rousseau, and is covered with cinders to a considerable height."†

---

* De la Beche, Geol. Man., p. 142. Quoy and Gaimard, Ann. des Sci. Nat., tome vi.

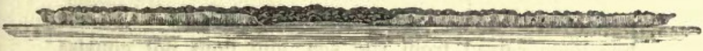
† Observ. on Geology of the West Indian Islands, Journ. of Sci., &c., No. x. p. 318.

*Reefs in the Pacific.* — The sunken reefs in the Pacific are sometimes of such extent that a series of ordinary earthquakes might, in the course of a few centuries, convert large tracts of them into dry land. It is therefore a remarkable circumstance that there should be so vast an area in Eastern Oceanica, studded with minute islands, without one single spot where there is a wider extent of land than belongs to such islands as Otaheite, Owhyhee, and a few others, which either have been or are still the seats of active volcanos. If an equilibrium only were maintained between the upheaving and depressing force of earthquakes, large islands would very soon be formed in the Pacific; for, in that case, the growth of limestone, the flowing of lava, and the ejection of volcanic ashes, would combine with the upheaving force to form new land.

Suppose the shoal, above described as 600 miles in length, to sink fifteen feet, and then to remain unmoved for a thousand years; during that interval the growing coral may again approach the surface. Then let the mass be re-elevated fifteen feet, so that the original reef is restored to its former position: in this case, the new coral formed since the first subsidence will constitute an island 600 miles long. An analogous result would have occurred if a lava-current fifteen feet thick had overflowed the submerged reef. The absence, therefore, of more extensive tracts of land in the Pacific seems to show that the amount of subsidence by earthquakes exceeds, in that quarter of the globe, at present the elevation due to the same cause.

*Elizabeth, or Henderson's Island.* — I mentioned that one of the thirty-two islands, examined by our navigators in the late expedition, was raised about eighty feet above the level of the sea.[*] It is called Elizabeth or Henderson's Island, and is five miles in length by one in breadth. It has a flat surface, and, on all sides, except the north, is bounded by perpendicular cliffs about fifty feet high, composed entirely of dead coral, more or less porous, honey-combed at the surface, and hardening into a compact calcareous mass, which possesses the fracture of secondary limestone, and has a species of millepore interspersed through it. These cliffs are considerably undermined by the action of the waves, and some of them appear on the eve of precipitating their superincumbent weight into the sea. Those which are less injured in this way present no alternate ridges or indication of the different levels which the sea might have occupied at different periods; but a smooth surface, as if the island, which has probably been raised by volcanic agency, had been forced up by one great subterraneous convulsion.[†]

Fig. 60.



*Elizabeth or Henderson's Island.*

At the distance of a few hundred yards from this island, no bottom could be gained with 200 fathoms of line. It will be seen, from the annexed sketch, communicated to me by Lieutenant Smith, of the Blossom, that the trees come down to the beach towards the centre of the island; a break which at first sight resembles the openings which usually lead into lagoons: but the trees stand on a steep slope, and no hollow of an ancient lagoon was perceived. The reader will remark, that such a mass of limestone represents exactly those horizontal cappings of calcareous strata which we sometimes find on hills which have tabular summits.

---

[*] According to some accounts, between sixty and seventy feet.

[†] Beechey's Voyage to the Pacific, &c., p. 46.

As earthquakes are now felt from time to time in this part of the Pacific, and as indications of very recent changes of level are not wanting *, the era of the elevation of Henderson's Island may not be very remote.

We are informed by Mr. Stutchbury, that upon the summit of nearly the highest mountain in Tahiti (or Otaheite), an island composed almost entirely of volcanic rocks, there is a distinct stratum of fossil coral, showing that a great part, if not the whole, island has been raised from the sea, and does not consist merely of lava and scoriæ, thrown out by supramarine eruptions. Whether the species of coral were identical with those now living, or what was the exact height of the coral, was unfortunately not ascertained; for Mr. Stutchbury did not visit the spot, though he saw some masses of the limestone which had fallen from the high mountain, and which appeared to him to resemble the coral of modern reefs. He supposed that the altitude of the highest peak in Otaheite was 12,000 feet, and that of the coral not greatly inferior; but Captain Beechey informs me, that the peak is not quite 7000 feet high, as he found, by the mean of three observations, carefully taken with the sextant. Mr. Stutchbury suggests that "as a great reef, or platform

---

* See Captain Beechey's Voyage to the Pacific, &c., pp. 159. and 191.

of coral, surrounds the actual shores of Otaheite, the island, had it been raised out of the sea gradually, or by a succession of movements, must have been everywhere coated over with a covering of coral; and as this is not the case, no coral having yet been seen in the interior, except on the mountain above mentioned, Otaheite must have been projected suddenly to its present height by a single upthrow." *

Before we adopt so important a conclusion we must, in the first place, remember that the surface of a small part only of the island has been carefully explored by naturalists, and, what is far more to the point, we have yet to learn whether some craters in Otaheite may not have been in eruption subsequently to the emergence of the island. At a much lower elevation than the coral, Mr. Stutchbury states that there is an extinct volcanic crater, having at its bottom a lake, about a mile in diameter; a fact also mentioned by Captain Beechey and others. Now in the volcanic island of Ischia, in the neighbourhood of Naples, some of the tuffs near the highest peak contain marine shells, similar to those now living in the Mediterranean; so that these tuffs were evidently submarine deposits. Consequently Ischia has, like Otaheite, been raised to its present height above the level of the sea by a movement from below. But we know, partly by historical and partly by geological evidence, that many of the Ischian cones and craters have been in eruption since it emerged; and during these eruptions its surface has been overspread with so dense a coating of lava and scoriæ, that it has now become impossible to determine whether the land rose suddenly or slowly, or what was

---

* Stutchbury, West of Eng. Journ., No. 1., p. 55.

the state of its surface when it first emerged. The same observations apply to Otaheite.

*Vast area of coral formations.* — The calcareous masses above considered constitute, together with the associated volcanic formations, the most extensive of the groups of rocks which can be demonstrated to be now in progress. The space in the sea which they occupy is so vast, that we may safely infer that they exceed in area any group of ancient rocks which can be proved to have been of contemporaneous origin. It is true that each of the great archipelagos of the Pacific are separated by unfathomable abysses, where no zoophytes may live, and no lavas flow; where not even a particle of coral sand or volcanic scoriæ may be drifted: but still, if we confine our view to the extent of reef ascertained to exist, and assume that a certain space around each volcanic or coral isle has been covered with ejections, or matter from the waste of cliffs, it will then be seen that the space occupied by these formations may equal, and perhaps exceed in area, that part of our continents which has been accurately explored by geologists.

That the increase of these calcareous masses should be principally, if not entirely, confined to the shallower parts of the ocean, or, in other words, to the summits of submarine ranges of mountains and elevated platforms, is a circumstance of the highest interest to the geologist; for if parts of the bed of such an ocean should be upraised, so as to form large continents, mountain-chains might appear, capped and flanked by calcareous strata of great thickness, and replete with organic remains; while in the intervening lower regions no rocks of contemporary origin would ever have existed.

*Lime, whence derived.* — A modern writer has attempted to revive the theory of some of the earlier geologists, that all limestones have originated in organized substances. If we examine, he says, the quantity of limestone in the primary strata, it will be found to bear a much smaller proportion to the siliceous and argillaceous rocks than in the secondary; and this may have some connexion with the rarity of testaceous animals in the ancient ocean. He further infers, that, in consequence of the operations of animals, "the quantity of calcareous earth deposited in the form of mud or stone is always increasing; and that, as the secondary series far exceeds the primary in this respect, so a third series may hereafter arise from the depths of the sea, which may exceed the last in the proportion of its calcareous strata." *

If these propositions went no farther than to suggest that every particle of lime that now enters into the crust of the globe may possibly in its turn have been subservient to the purposes of life, by entering into the composition of organized bodies, I should not deem the speculation improbable; but, when it is hinted that lime may be an animal product combined by the powers of vitality from some simple elements, I can discover no sufficient grounds for such an hypothesis, and many facts which militate against it.

If a large pond be made, in almost any soil, and filled with rain water, it may usually become tenanted by testacea; for carbonate of lime is almost universally diffused in small quantities. But if no calcareous matter be supplied by waters flowing from the surrounding high grounds, or by springs, no tufa or shell-marl are formed. The thin shells of one generation of molluscs decompose, so that their elements afford nutriment to the succeeding races; and it is only where a stream enters a lake, which may introduce a fresh supply of calcareous matter, or where the lake is fed by springs, that shells accumulate and form marl.

---

* Macculloch's Syst. of Geol., vol. i. p. 219.

All the lakes in Forfarshire which have produced deposits of shell-marl have been the sites of springs, which still evolve much carbonic acid, and a small quantity of carbonate of lime. But there is no marl in Lock Fithie, near Forfar, where there are *no springs*, although that lake is surrounded by these calcareous deposits, and although, in every other respect, the site is favourable to the accumulation of aquatic testacea.

We find those charæ which secrete the largest quantity of calcareous matter in their stems to abound near springs impregnated with carbonate of lime. We know that, if the common hen be deprived altogether of calcareous nutriment, the shells of her eggs will become of too slight a consistency to protect the contents; and some birds eat chalk greedily during the breeding season.

If, on the other hand, we turn to the phenomena of inorganic nature, we observe that, in volcanic countries, there is an enormous evolution of carbonic acid, either free, in a gaseous form, or mixed with water; and the springs of such districts are usually impregnated with carbonate of lime in great abundance. No one who has travelled in Tuscany, through the region of extinct volcanos and its confines, or who has seen the map recently constructed by Targioni, to show the principal sites of mineral springs, can doubt, for a moment, that if this territory was submerged beneath the sea, it might supply materials for the most extensive coral reefs. The importance of these springs is not to be estimated by the magnitude of the rocks which they have thrown down on the slanting sides of hills, although of these alone large cities might be built, nor by a coating of travertin that covers the soil in some districts for miles in length. The greater part of the calcareous matter passes down in a state of solution to the sea; and a geologist might as well assume the mass of alluvium formed in a few years in the bed of the Po, or the Ganges, to be the measure of the quantity deposited in the course of centuries in the deltas of those rivers, as conceive that the influence of the carbonated springs in Italy can be estimated by the mass of tufa precipitated by them near their sources.

It is generally admitted that the abundance of carbonate of lime given out by springs, in regions where volcanic eruptions or earthquakes prevail, is referrible to the solvent power of carbonic acid. For, as the acidulous waters percolate calcareous strata, they take up a certain portion of lime and carry it up to the surface, where, under diminished pressure in the atmosphere, it may be deposited, or, being absorbed by animals and vegetables, may be secreted by them. In Auvergne, springs charged with carbonate of lime rise through granite, in which case we must suppose the calcareous matter to be derived from some primary rock, unless we imagine it to rise up from the volcanic foci themselves.

We see no reason for supposing that the lime now on the surface, or in the crust of the earth, may not, as well as the silex, alumine, or any other mineral substance, have existed before the first organic beings were created, if it be assumed that the arrangement of the inorganic materials of our planet preceded in the order of time the introduction of the first organic inhabitants.

But if the carbonate of lime, secreted by the testacea and corals of the Pacific, be chiefly derived *from below*, and if it be a very general effect of the action of subterranean heat to subtract calcareous matter from the *inferior* rocks, and to cause it to ascend to the surface, no argument can be derived in favour of the progressive increase of limestone from the magnitude of coral reefs, or the greater proportion of calcareous strata, in the more modern formations. A constant transfer of carbonate of lime from the inferior parts of the earth's crust to its surface, would cause throughout all future time, and for an indefinite succession of geological epochs, a preponderance of calcareous matter in the newer, as contrasted with the older formations.

# BOOK IV.

## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

System of inquiry into the causes of geological phenomena as adopted in this work, how differing from that of many preceding writers — Illustrations from the history of Geology of the respective merits of the two systems — Reasons for prefixing to a work on Geology treatises respecting the changes now in progress in the animate and inanimate world.

Having considered, in the preceding books, the actual operation of the causes of change which affect the earth's surface and its inhabitants, we are now about to enter upon a new division of our inquiry, and it may be useful to offer a few preliminary observations, to establish the connexion between two distinct parts of this work, and to explain in what manner its plan differs from that usually followed by preceding writers on Geology.

All naturalists who have carefully examined the arrangement of the mineral masses composing the earth's crust, and who have studied their internal structure and fossil contents, have recognized therein the signs of a great succession of former changes; and the causes of these changes have been the object of anxious inquiry. As the first theorists possessed but a scanty acquaintance with the present economy of the animate and inanimate world, and the vicissitudes to which these are subject, we find them in the situation of novices, who attempt to read a history written in a foreign language, doubting about the meaning of the most ordinary terms; disputing, for example, whether a shell was really a shell,—whether sand and pebbles were the result of aqueous trituration, — whether stratification was the effect of successive deposition from water; and a thousand other elementary questions, which now appear to us so easy and simple, that we can hardly conceive them to have once afforded matter for warm and tedious controversy.

In the first book were enumerated many of the prepossessions which may have biassed the minds of the earlier inquirers, and checked an impartial desire of arriving at truth. But of all the causes alluded to, no one contributed so powerfully to give rise to a false method of philosophizing, as the entire unconsciousness of the first geologists of the extent of their own ignorance respecting the operations of the existing agents of change.

They imagined themselves sufficiently acquainted with the mutations now in progress in the animate and inanimate world, to entitle them at once to determine, whether the solution of certain problems in geology could ever be derived from the observation of the actual economy of nature; and, having decided that they could not, they felt themselves at liberty to indulge their imaginations, in guessing at what *might be*, rather than in inquiring *what is;* in other words, they employed themselves in conjecturing what might have been the course of nature at a remote period, rather than in the investigation of what was the course of nature in their own times.

It appeared to them more philosophical to speculate on the possibilities of the past, than patiently to explore the realities of the present; and having invented theories under the influence of such maxims, they were consistently unwilling to test their validity by the criterion of their accordance with the ordinary operations of nature. On the contrary, the claims of each new hypothesis to credibility appeared enhanced by the great contrast of the causes or forces introduced to those now developed in our terrestrial system during a period, as it has been termed, of *repose.*

Never was there a dogma more calculated to foster indolence, and to blunt the keen edge of curiosity, than this assumption of the discordance between the former and the existing causes of change. It produced a state of mind unfavourable in the highest degree to the candid reception of the evidence of those minute but incessant alterations which every part of the earth's surface is undergoing, and by which the condition of its living inhabitants is continually made to vary. The student, instead of being encouraged with the hope of interpreting the enigmas presented to him in the earth's structure, — instead of being prompted to undertake laborious inquiries into the natural history of the organic world, and the complicated effects of the igneous and aqueous causes now in operation, was taught to despond from the first. Geology, it was affirmed, could never rise to the rank of an exact science, — the greater number of phenomena must for ever remain inexplicable, or only be partially elucidated by ingenious conjectures. Even the mystery which invested the subject was said to constitute one of its principal charms, affording, as it did, full scope to the fancy to indulge in a boundless field of speculation.

The course directly opposed to these theoretical views consists in an earnest and patient endeavour to reconcile the former indications of change with the evidence of gradual mutations now in progress; restricting us, in the first instance, to known causes, and then speculating on those which may be in activity in regions inaccessible to us. It seeks an interpretation of geological monuments, by comparing the changes of which they give evidence with the vicissitudes now in progress, or *which may be* in progress.

I shall give a few examples in illustration of the practical results already derived from the two distinct methods of theorizing; for we have now the advantage of being enabled to judge of their respective merits, by the relative value of the fruits which they have produced.

From the historical sketch before given of the progress of geology, the reader has seen that a controversy was maintained for more than a century respecting the origin of fossil shells and bones — were they organic or inorganic substances? That the latter opinion should for a long time have prevailed, and that these bodies should have been supposed to be fashioned into their present form by a plastic virtue, or some other mysterious agency, may appear absurd; but it was, perhaps, as reasonable a conjecture as could be expected from those who did not appeal, in the first instance, to the analogy of the living creation, as affording the only source of authentic information. It was only by an accurate examination of living testacea, and by a comparison of the osteology of the existing vertebrated animals with the remains found entombed in ancient strata, that this favourite dogma was exploded, and all were, at length, persuaded that these substances were exclusively of organic origin.

In like manner, when a discussion had arisen as to the nature of basalt and other mineral masses, evidently constituting a particular class of rocks, the popular opinion inclined to a belief that they were of aqueous, not of igneous origin. These rocks, it was said, might have been precipitated from an aqueous solution, from a chaotic fluid, or an ocean which rose over the continents, charged with the requisite mineral ingredients. Few will now dispute that it would have been difficult to invent a theory more distant from the truth; yet we must cease to wonder that it gained so many proselytes, when we remember that its claims to probability arose partly from the very circumstance of its confirming the assumed want of all analogy between geological causes and those now in action.

By what train of investigation were all theorists brought round, at length, to an opposite opinion, and induced to assent to the igneous origin of these formations? By an examination of the structure of active volcanos, the mineral composition of their lavas and ejections, and by comparing the undoubted products of fire with the ancient rocks in question.

I shall adduce one more example. When the organic origin of fossil shells had been conceded, their occurrence in strata forming some of the loftiest mountains in the world was admitted as a proof of a great alteration of the relative level of sea and land; and the question then arose, whether this change was to be accounted for by the partial drying up of the ocean, or by the elevation of the solid land. The former hypothesis, although afterwards abandoned by general consent, was at first embraced by a vast majority. A multitude of ingenious speculations were hazarded, to show how the level of the ocean might have been depressed; and when these theories had all failed, the inquiry, as to what vicissitudes of this nature might now be taking place, was, as usual, resorted to in the last instance. On inquiring, whether any changes in the level of sea and land had occurred during the historical period, it was soon discovered, by patient research, that considerable tracts of land had been permanently elevated and depressed, while the level of the ocean remained unaltered. It was therefore necessary to reverse the doctrine which had acquired so much popularity; and the unexpected solution of a problem at first regarded as so enigmatical gave, perhaps, the strongest stimulus ever yet afforded to investigate the ordinary operations of nature.

Of late years, the points of discussion in geology have been transferred to new questions, and those, for the most part, of a higher and more general nature. We are now nearly agreed as to what rocks are of igneous, and what of aqueous origin,—in what manner fossil shells, whether of the sea or of lakes, have been imbedded in strata,—how sand may have been converted into sandstone,—and are unanimous as to many other propositions which are not of a complicated nature; but when we ascend to those of a higher order, we are still too often reluctant to make a strenuous effort, in the first instance, to search out an explanation in the ordinary economy of Nature. If, for example, we seek for the causes why mineral masses are associated together in certain groups; why they are arranged in a certain order, which is never inverted; why there are many breaks in the continuity of the series; why different organic remains are found in distinct sets of strata; why there is often an abrupt passage from an assemblage of species contained in one formation to that in another immediately superimposed,—when these, and other topics of an equally extensive kind are discussed, we often find the habit of indulging conjectures, respecting irregular and extraordinary causes, to be still in force.

We hear of sudden and violent revolutions of the globe—of the instantaneous elevation of mountain chains—of paroxysms of volcanic energy, declining, according to some, and, according to others, increasing in violence, from the earliest to the latest ages. We are also told of general catastrophes, and a succession of deluges—of the alternation of periods of repose and disorder—of the refrigeration of the primitive heated nucleus of the globe—of the sudden annihilation of whole races of animals and plants—and other hypotheses, in which we see the ancient spirit of speculation revived, and a desire manifestly shown to cut, rather than patiently to untie, the Gordian knot.

In the following attempt to unravel these difficult questions, I shall endeavour, as far as possible, to restrict myself to the known or possible operations of existing causes; feeling assured that we have not yet exhausted the resources which the study of the present course of nature may provide, and therefore that we are not authorized, in the infancy of our science, to recur to extraordinary agents. I shall adhere to this plan, not only on the grounds explained in the first book; but because, as I have just stated, the history of the science informs us that this method has always put geologists on the road that leads to truth—suggesting views which, although imperfect at first, have been found capable of improvement, until at last adopted by universal consent. On the other hand, the opposite method, that of speculating on a former distinct state of things, has led invariably to a multitude of contradictory systems, which have been overthrown one after the other,—which have been found quite incapable of modification,—and which are often required to be precisely reversed.

In regard to the subjects treated of in the last two books,—the recent changes of the organic and inorganic world,—they may be said to constitute the alphabet and grammar of geology. If I had found systematic treatises previously written on these topics, I should willingly have entered at once upon the description of geological monuments properly so called: in which case, I should have referred to other authors for the elucidation of elementary and collateral questions, just as I shall now appeal to the best authorities in conchology and comparative anatomy for the proof of positions which, but for the labours of naturalists devoted to those departments, would have demanded long digressions.

## CHAPTER II.

### GENERAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE MATERIALS COMPOSING THE EARTH'S CRUST.

**The existing continents chiefly composed of subaqueous deposits — Distinction between sedimentary and volcanic rocks — Between primary, secondary, and tertiary — Origin of the rocks usually termed primary — Transition formations (p. 340.) — Secondary and tertiary strata — Chronological relations of mineral masses — Laws of superposition — Relative age proved by included fragments of older rocks — Proofs of contemporaneous origin derived from mineral characters — from organic remains (p. 347.) — Zoological provinces of limited extent — Modes whereby dissimilar mineral masses and distinct groups of species may be proved to have been contemporaneous.**

When we examine into the structure of the earth's crust, or that small portion of the exterior of our planet accessible to human observation, whether we pursue our inquiries by aid of mining operations, or by observing the sections laid open in the sea cliffs, or in the deep ravines of mountainous countries, we discover everywhere a series of mineral masses, which are not thrown together in a confused heap, but arranged with considerable order; and even where their original position has undergone great subsequent disturbance, there still remain proofs of the order that once reigned.

If we drain a lake, we frequently find at the bottom a series of recent deposits disposed with great regularity one above the other; the uppermost, perhaps, may be a stratum of peat, next below a more compact variety of the same material, still lower a bed of laminated shell marl alternating with peat, and then other beds of marl divided by layers of clay. Now if a second pit be sunk through the same continuous lacustrine deposit, at some distance from the first, we commonly meet with nearly the same series of beds, yet with slight variations; some, for example, of the layers of sand, clay, or marl may be wanting, one or more of them having thinned out and given place to others, or sometimes one of the masses, first examined, is observed to increase in thickness to the exclusion of other beds. At length we reach a point where the whole assemblage of lacustrine strata terminate, as for example when we arrive at the borders of the original lake-basin. Here the beds come in contact with the rocks which form the boundary of, and, at the same time, pass under all the recent accumulations.

In almost every estuary, we may observe at low water phenomena analogous to those of lakes, where the current has cut away part of some newly formed bank, consisting of a series of horizontal strata of peat, sand, clay, and, sometimes, interposed beds of shells. Each of these may often be traced over a considerable area, some extending farther than others, but all of necessity confined within the basin of the estuary. Similar remarks are applicable, on a much more extended scale, to the recent deltas of great rivers, like the Ganges, where, after the periodical inundations have subsided, sections are exposed in the river-banks and cliffs of numerous islands, in which horizontal beds of clay and sand may be traced over areas many hundred miles in length, and more than a hundred in breadth.

*Subaqueous deposits.* — The greater part of our continents are evidently composed of subaqueous deposits; and in the manner of their arrangement we discover many characters precisely similar to those above described; but the different groups of strata are, for the most part, on a greater scale, both in regard to depth and area, than any observable in the formations of lakes, deltas, or estuaries. We find, for example, masses of limestone several hundred feet in thickness, containing corals and shells, and stretching from one country to another; yet always giving place, at length, to a distinct set of strata, which either rise up from beneath like the rocks before alluded to as forming the boundary of a lake, or cover and conceal them. In other places, we find beds of pebbles and sand, or of clay, of great thickness. The different formations composed of these materials usually contain some peculiar and appropriate organic remains; as, for example, certain species of shells and corals, or certain plants.

*Volcanic rocks.* — Besides these strata of aqueous origin, we find other rocks which are immediately recognized to be the products of fire, from their exact resemblance to those which have been produced in modern times by volcanos, and thus we immediately establish two distinct orders of mineral masses composing the crust of the globe — the sedimentary and the volcanic.

*Rocks commonly called primary.* — But if we examine a large portion of a continent which contains within it a lofty mountain range, we rarely fail to discover another class of rocks very distinct from either of those above alluded to, and which we can assimilate neither to deposits such as are now accumulated in lakes or seas, nor to those generated by ordinary volcanic action. This class consists of granite, granitic schist, roofing slate, and many other rocks, of a much more compact and crystalline texture than the sedimentary and volcanic divisions before mentioned. In the unstratified portion of these crystalline masses, as in the granite, for example, no organic fossil remains have ever been discovered, and only a few faint traces of them in some of the *stratified* groups of the same class; for I may remark, that a considerable portion of these rocks are divided, not only into strata, but into laminæ, so closely imitating the internal arrangement of well-known aqueous deposits, as to leave scarcely any reasonable doubt that they owe this part of their texture to similar causes.

These remarkable formations have been called *primitive*, from their having been supposed to constitute the most ancient mineral productions of the globe, and from a notion that they originated before the earth was inhabited by living beings, and while yet the planet was in a nascent state. The high relative antiquity of some of them is indisputable; for in the oldest sedimentary strata, containing organic remains, we often meet with rounded pebbles of the crystalline rocks, which must therefore have been consolidated before the derivative strata were formed out of their ruins. The members of this granitic group generally rise up from beneath the rocks of mechanical origin, entering into the structure of lofty mountains, so as to occupy, at the same time, the lowest and most elevated position in the crust of the globe.

*Origin of rocks called primary.*— Nothing strictly analogous to these crystalline formations can now be seen in the progress of formation on the habitable surface of the earth — nothing, at least, within the range of human observation. The first speculators, however, in Geology found no difficulty in explaining their origin, by supposing a former condition of the planet perfectly distinct from the present, when certain chemical processes were developed on a great scale, whereby crystalline precipitates were formed, some more suddenly, in huge amorphous masses, such as granite; others by successive deposition and with a foliated and stratified structure, as in the rocks termed gneiss and mica-schist. A great part of these views have since been abandoned, more especially with regard to the origin of granite; but it is interesting to trace the train of reasoning by which they were suggested. First, the stratified primitive rocks exhibited, as was before mentioned, well-defined marks of successive accumulation, analogous to those so common in ordinary subaqueous deposits. As the latter formations were found divisible into natural groups, characterized by certain peculiarities of mineral composition, so also were the primitive. In the next place, there were discovered, in many districts, certain members of the so-called primitive series, either alternating with or passing by intermediate gradations into rocks of a decidedly mechanical origin, containing traces of organic remains. From such gradual passage the aqueous origin of the stratified crystalline rocks was fairly inferred; and as we find in the different strata of subaqueous origin every gradation between a mechanical and a purely crystalline texture, between sand, for example, and saccharoid gypsum, so it was imagined that, in a former state of the planet, the different degrees of crystallization in the older rocks might have been dependent on the varying conditions of the menstruum from which they were precipitated.

The presence, however, of certain crystalline ingredients in the composition of many of the primary rocks rendered it necessary to resort to many arbitrary hypotheses, in order to explain their precipitation from aqueous solution; and for this reason a difference in the condition of the planet, and in the pristine energy of chemical causes, was assumed. A train of speculation originally suggested by the observed effects of aqueous agents was thus pushed beyond the limits of analogy; and it was not until a different and almost opposite course of induction was pursued, beginning with an examination of volcanic products, that more sound theoretical views were established.

*Granite of igneous origin.* — A passage was first traced from lava into other more crystalline igneous rocks, and from these again to granite, which last was found to send forth dikes and veins into the contiguous strata, in a manner strictly analogous to that observed in volcanic rocks, and to produce at the point of contact such changes as might be expected to result from the influence of a heated mass cooling down slowly under great pressure from a state of fusion. The want of stratification in granite supplied another point of analogy in confirmation of its igneous origin; and as some masses were found to send out veins through others, it was evident that there were granites of different ages; and that instead of forming in all cases the oldest part of the earth's crust, as had at first been supposed, some granites were of comparatively recent origin, and newer than the stratified rocks which covered them and were pierced by granite veins.

*Stratified crystalline rocks.*—The theory of the origin of the other crystalline rocks was soon modified by these new views respecting the nature of granite. First it was shown, by numerous examples, that ordinary volcanic dikes might produce great alterations in the sedimentary strata which they traversed, causing them to assume a more crystalline texture, and nearly obliterating all traces of organic remains, without, at the same time, destroying the surfaces of stratification. It was also found that granite dikes and veins produced analogous, though somewhat different changes; and hence it was suggested as highly probable that the effects to which small veins gave rise, to the distance of a few yards, might be superinduced on a much grander scale where vast masses of fused rock, intensely heated for ages, came in contact at great depths from the surface with sedimentary formations. The slow action of heat in such cases, it was thought, might occasion a state of semi-fusion; so that, on the cooling down of the masses, the different materials might be arranged in new forms, according to their chemical affinities, and all traces of organic remains might disappear, while the stratiform and lamellar texture remained.

According to these views, the primary strata may have assumed their crystalline structure at as many successive periods as there have been distinct eras of the formation of granite; and their difference of mineral composition may be attributed, not to an original difference of the conditions under which they were deposited at the surface, but to subsequent modifications superinduced by heat and other causes at great depths below the surface.

The strict propriety of the term primitive, as applied to granite, and to the granitiform and associated rocks, thus became questionable; and the term primary was very generally substituted, as simply expressing the fact that the crystalline rocks, *as a mass*, were older than the *secondary*, or those which are unequivocally of a mechanical origin and contain organic remains.

*Transition formations.*—It has been stated that the crystalline or primary series sometimes passes by intermediate gradations into strata of mechanical origin containing organic remains. The formations of intermediate character by which that passage was effected were often observed to partake, in a perplexing degree, of the characters of the crystalline series and of those containing fossils. They were termed by Werner "transition rocks;" and he imagined that as gneiss and mica-schist had been precipitated from the waters of the first universal and chaotic ocean, so this ocean still continued to throw down some crystalline matter after the waters were inhabited by a few of the first created marine animals, and when the waves and currents had already begun to transport sand and mud, and deposit them at the bottom of the sea.

The question whether the mineral peculiarities of the rocks called transition have been derived from subsequent modifications, which sedimentary strata may in the course of ages undergo, or from some original and essential difference in their composition and structure, is one which cannot be discussed here, as it is connected with inquiries into the nature of the granitic schists which must be deferred to the end of this work.

All the stratified rocks not arranged either in the primary or transition class, were at first called secondary, a division including nearly the whole of the fossiliferous strata then known; but after some progress had been made in classifying the secondary rocks, and in assigning to each its relative place in a chronological series, another division of sedimentary formations was established, called *tertiary*, as being of newer origin than the secondary, and characterized by distinct species of fossil animals and plants. These tertiary formations were found to consist very generally of detached and isolated masses, surrounded on all sides by primary and secondary rocks, and occupying a position, in reference to the latter, very like that of the waters of lakes, inland seas, and gulfs, in relation to a continent, and, like such waters, being often of great depth, though of limited area. The imbedded organic remains were chiefly those of marine animals, but with frequent intermixtures of terrestrial and fresh-water species which are rarely found among the secondary fossils. Frequently there was evidence of the deposits having been purely lacustrine, a circumstance which had not been clearly ascertained in regard to any secondary group.

I shall consider more particularly in the fourth chapter, how far this distinction of rocks into secondary and tertiary is founded in nature, and in what relation these two great divisions may be supposed to stand to each other.

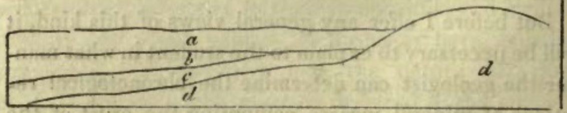
But before I offer any general views of this kind, it will be necessary to explain to the student in what manner the geologist can determine the chronological relations of mineral masses composing the crust of the earth; for as different rocks have been formed in succession, one of the principal objects in geological investigations is to determine the time as well as the mode of their formation.

### *Proofs of relative Age by Superposition.*

It is evident that, where we find a series of horizontal strata of sedimentary origin, the uppermost bed must be newer than those which it overlies; and that, when we observe one distinct set of strata reposing upon another, the inferior is the older of the two. In countries where the original position of mineral masses has been disturbed, at different periods, by convulsions of extraordinary violence, as in the Alps and other mountainous districts, there are instances where the original position of strata has been reversed. Such exceptions, however, are rare, and usually on a small scale; and an experienced observer can generally ascertain the true relations of the rocks in question, by examining some adjoining districts where the derangement has been less extensive.

Soon after the first observers had convinced themselves that strata of aqueous origin were divisible into different groups, each characterized by its peculiar fossils and mineral characters, they also ascertained that there was a determinate order of succession in these groups, which was never inverted, although the different formations were not co-extensively distributed; so

Fig. 61.



that, if there be four different formations, as *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, in the annexed diagram (Fig. 61.), which, in certain localities, may be seen in vertical superposition, the uppermost or newest of them, *a*, will in other places be in contact with *c*, or with the lowest of the whole series, *d*, all the intermediate formations being absent.

In regard to the age of volcanic formations, if we find a layer of tuff or ejected matter, or a stream of lava covering sedimentary strata, we may infer, with confidence, that the igneous rock is the more recent; but, on the other hand, the superposition of aqueous deposits to a volcanic mass does not always prove the superimposed beds to be of newer origin. If, indeed, we discover strata of tuff with imbedded shells, or, as in the Vicentine and other places, rolled blocks of lava, with adhering shells and corals, we may then be sure that these masses of volcanic origin covered the bottom of the sea before the superincumbent strata were thrown down. But, as lava rises from below, and does not always reach the surface, it may sometimes penetrate a certain number of strata, and then cool down, so as to constitute a solid mass of newer origin, although inferior in position. It is, for the most part, by the passage of veins proceeding from such igneous rocks through contiguous sedimentary strata, or by such hardening and other alteration of the overlying bed as might be expected to result from contact with a heated mass, that we are enabled to decide whether the volcanic matter was previously consolidated, or subsequently introduced.

### *Proofs by included Fragments of older Rocks.*

A geologist is sometimes at a loss, after investigating a district composed of two distinct formations, to determine the relative ages of each, from want of sections exhibiting their superposition. In such cases, another kind of evidence, of a character no less conclusive, can sometimes be obtained. One group of strata has frequently been derived from the degradation of another in the immediate neighbourhood, and may be observed to include within it fragments of such older rocks. Thus, for example, we may find chalk with flints; and, in another part of the same country, a distinct series, consisting of alternations of clay, sand, and pebbles. If some of these pebbles consist of flints, with fossil shells of the same species as those in the chalk, we may confidently infer that the chalk is the oldest of the two formations.

I have already remarked, that some granite must have existed before the most ancient of our secondary rocks, because some of the latter contain rounded pebbles of granite. But for the existence of such evidence, we might not have felt assured that all the granite which we see was not protruded from below in a state of fusion, subsequently to the origin of the secondary strata.

### *Proofs of contemporaneous Origin derived from Mineral Characters.*

When we have established the relative age of two formations in a given place, from direct superposition, or by other evidence, a far more difficult task remains, —to trace the continuity of the same formation, or, in other cases, to find means of referring detached groups of rocks to a contemporaneous origin. Such identifications of age are chiefly derivable from two sources, —mineral character and organic contents; but the utmost skill and caution are required in the application of these tests, for scarcely any general rules can be laid down respecting either that do not admit of important exceptions.

If at certain periods of the past, rocks of peculiar mineral composition had been precipitated simultaneously upon the floor of a "universal ocean," so as to invest the whole earth in a succession of concentric coats, the determination of relative dates in geology might have been a matter of the greatest simplicity. To explain, indeed, the phenomenon would have been difficult, or, rather, impossible, as such appearances would have implied a former state of the globe, without any analogy to that now prevailing. Suppose, for example, there were three masses extending over every continent, — the upper of chalk and chloritic sand; the next below, of blue argillaceous limestone; and the third and lowest, of red marl and sandstone: we must imagine that all the rivers and currents of the world had been charged, at the first period, with red mud and sand; at the second, with blue calcareo-argillaceous mud; and at a subsequent epoch, with chalky sediment and chloritic sand.

But, if the ocean were universal, there could have been no land to waste away by the action of the sea and rivers, and, therefore, no known source whence the homogeneous sedimentary matter could have been derived. Few, perhaps, of the earlier geologists went so far as to believe implicitly in such universality of formations, but they inclined to an opinion that they were continuous over areas almost indefinite; and since such a disposition of mineral masses would, if true, have been the least complex, and most convenient for the purposes of classification, it is probable that a belief in its reality was often promoted by the hope that it might prove true. As to the objection, that such an arrangement of mineral masses could never result from any combination of causes now in action, it never weighed with the earlier cultivators of the science, since they indulged no expectation of being ever able to account for geological phenomena by reference to the known economy of nature. On the contrary, they set out, as we have already seen, with the assumption that the past and present conditions of the planet were too dissimilar to admit of exact comparison.

But, if we inquire into the true composition of any stratum, or set of strata, and endeavour to pursue these continuously through a country, we often find that the character of the mass changes gradually, and becomes at length so different that we should never have suspected its identity, if we had not been enabled to trace its passage from one form to another.

We soon discover that rocks dissimilar in mineral composition have originated simultaneously: we find, moreover, evidence in certain districts, of the recurrence of rocks of precisely the same mineral character at very different periods; as for example, two formations of red sandstone, with a great series of other strata intervening between them. Such repetitions might have been anticipated, since these red sandstones are produced by the decomposition of granite, gneiss, and mica-schist; and districts composed exclusively of these must again and again be exposed to decomposition, and to the erosive action of running water.

But, notwithstanding the variations before alluded to in the composition of one continuous set of strata, many rocks retain the same homogeneous structure and composition throughout considerable areas, and frequently, after a change of mineral character, preserve their new peculiarities throughout other tracts of great extent. Thus, for example, we may trace a limestone for a hundred miles, and then observe that it becomes more arenaceous, until it finally passes into sand or sandstone. We may then follow the last-mentioned formation throughout another district as extensive as that occupied by the limestone first examined.

### *Proofs of contemporaneous Origin derived from Organic Remains.*

I devoted several chapters in the last book to show that the habitable surface of the sea and land may be divided into a considerable number of distinct provinces, each peopled by a peculiar assemblage of animals and plants, and I endeavoured to point out the origin of these separate divisions. It was shown that climate is only one of many causes on which they depend; and that difference of longitude, as well as latitude, is generally accompanied by a dissimilarity of indigenous species of organic beings.

As different seas, therefore, and lakes are inhabited, at the same period, by different species of aquatic animals and plants, and as the lands adjoining these may be peopled by distinct terrestrial species, it follows that distinct organic remains are imbedded in contemporaneous deposits. If it were otherwise — if the same species abounded in every climate, or even in every part of the globe where a corresponding temperature and other conditions favourable to their existence were found, the identification of mineral masses of the same age, by means of their included organic contents, would be a matter of much greater facility. But, fortunately, the extent of the same zoological provinces, especially those of marine animals, is very great; so that we are entitled to expect, from analogy, that the identity of fossil species, throughout large areas, will often enable us to connect together a great variety of detached formations.

Thus, for example, it will be seen, by reference to the second book, that deposits now forming in different parts of the Mediterranean, as in the deltas of the Rhone and the Nile, are distinct in mineral composition; for calcareous rocks are precipitated from the waters of the Rhone, while pebbles are carried into its delta, and there cemented, by carbonate of lime, into a conglomerate; whereas strata exclusively of soft mud and fine sand are formed in the Nilotic delta. The Po, again, carries down fine sand and mud into the Adriatic; but since this sediment is derived from the degradation of a different assemblage of mountains from those drained by the Rhone or the Nile, we may safely assume that there will never be an exact identity in their respective deposits.*

If we pass to another quarter of the Mediterranean, as, for example, to the sea on the coast of Campania, or near the base of Etna in Sicily, or to the Grecian archipelago, we find in all these localities that distinct combinations of rocks are in progress. Occasional showers of volcanic ashes are falling into the sea, and streams of lava are overflowing its bottom; and in the intervals between volcanic eruptions, beds of sand and clay are frequently derived from the waste of cliffs, or the turbid waters of rivers. Limestones, moreover, such as the Italian travertins, are here and there precipitated from the waters of mineral springs, while shells and corals accumulate in various places. Yet the entire Mediterranean, where the above-mentioned formations are simultaneously in progress, may be considered as one zoological province; for, although certain species of testacea and zoophytes may be very local, and each region may probably have some species peculiar to it, still a considerable number are common to the whole sea. If, therefore, at some future period, the bed of this inland sea should be converted into land, the geologist might be enabled, by reference to organic remains, to prove the contemporaneous origin of various mineral masses throughout a space equal in area to a great portion of Europe. The Black Sea, moreover, is inhabited by so many species identical with those of the Mediterranean, that the deltas of the Danube and the Don might, by the same evidence, be shown to have originated simultaneously.

---

* Vol. I. pp. 341. 346. 349.

Such identity of fossils, I may remark, not only enables us to refer to the same era distinct rocks widely separated from each other in the horizontal plane, but also others which may be considerably distant in the vertical series. Thus, for example, we may find alternating beds of clay, sand, and lava, two thousand feet in thickness, the whole of which may be proved to belong to the same epoch, by the specific identity of the fossil shells dispersed throughout the whole series.

The reader, however, will perceive, by referring to what was before said of zoological provinces*, that they are sometimes separated from each other by very narrow barriers, and for this reason contiguous rocks may be formed at the same time, differing widely both in mineral contents and organic remains. Thus, for example, the testacea, zoophytes, and fish of the Red Sea are, as a group, very distinct from those inhabiting the adjoining parts of the Mediterranean, although the two seas are separated only by the narrow isthmus of Suez. Calcareous formations have accumulated, on a great scale, in the Red Sea, in modern times, and fossil shells of existing species are well preserved therein[*]; and we know that, at the mouth of the Nile, large deposits of mud are amassed, including the remains of Mediterranean species. Hence it follows that if, at some future period, the bed of the Red Sea should be laid dry, the geologist might experience great difficulties in endeavouring to ascertain the relative age of these formations, which, although dissimilar both in organic and mineral characters, were of synchronous origin.

---

* See p. 100.

But we must not forget that the north-western shores of the Arabian Gulf, the plains of Egypt, and the isthmus of Suez, are all parts of one province of *terrestrial* species. Small streams, therefore, occasional land-floods, and those winds which drift clouds of sand along the deserts, might carry down into the Red Sea the same shells of fluviatile and land testacea which the Nile is sweeping into its delta, together with some remains of terrestrial plants, whereby the groups of strata, before alluded to, might, notwithstanding the discrepancy of their mineral composition, and *marine* organic fossils, be shown to have belonged to the same epoch.

In like manner, the rivers which descend into the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico on one side, and into the Pacific on the other, carry down the same fluviatile and terrestrial spoils into seas which are inhabited by different groups of marine species.

---

[*] See chap. x.

But it will much more frequently happen, that the co-existence of *terrestrial* species of distinct zoological and botanical provinces will be proved by the specific identity of the *marine* organic remains which inhabited the intervening space. Thus, for example, the distinct terrestrial species of the south of Europe, north of Africa, and north-west of Asia, might all be shown to have been contemporaneous, if we suppose the rivers flowing from these three countries to carry the remains of different species of the animal and vegetable kingdoms into the Mediterranean.

In like manner, the sea intervening between the northern shores of Australia and the islands of the Indian Ocean contains a great proportion of the same species of corallines and testacea; yet the *land animals and plants* of the two regions are very dissimilar, even the islands nearest to Australia, as Java, New Guinea, and others, being inhabited by a distinct assemblage of terrestrial species. It is well known that there are calcareous rocks, volcanic tuff, and other strata in progress, in different parts of these intermediate seas, wherein marine organic remains might be preserved and associated with the terrestrial fossils above alluded to.

As it frequently happens that the barriers between different provinces of animals and plants are not very strongly marked, especially where they are determined by differences of temperature, there will usually be a passage from one set of species to another, as in a sea extending from the temperate to the tropical zone. In such cases, we may be enabled to prove, by the fossils of intermediate deposits, the connexion between the distinct provinces, since these intervening spaces will be inhabited by many species, common both to the temperate and equatorial seas.

On the other hand, we may be sometimes able, by aid of a peculiar homogeneous deposit, to prove the former co-existence of distinct animals and plants in distant regions. Suppose, for example, that in the course of ages the sediment of a river, like that of the Red River in Louisiana, is dispersed over an area several hundred leagues in length, so as to pass from the tropics into the temperate zone, the fossil remains imbedded in red mud might indicate the different forms which inhabited, at the same period, those remote regions of the earth.

It appears, then, that mineral and organic characters, although often inconstant, may, nevertheless, enable us to establish the contemporaneous origin of formations in distant countries. The same species of organic beings probably extend over wider areas than deposits of homogeneous composition; and if so, they will be of more importance in geological classification even than mineral peculiarities; but it fortunately may happen that where the one criterion fails, we may often avail ourselves of the other. Thus, for example, sedimentary strata are as likely to preserve the same colour and composition in a part of the ocean reaching from the borders of the tropics to the temperate zone, as in any other quarter of the globe; but in such spaces the variation of species is always most considerable.

In conclusion, it may be observed, that in endeavouring to prove the contemporaneous origin of strata in remote countries by organic remains, we must form our conclusions from a great number of species, since a single species may be enabled to survive vicissitudes in the earth's surface whereby thousands of others are exterminated. When a change of climate takes place, some may migrate and inhabit other latitudes, and so abound there as to become characteristic in those regions of strata of a subsequent era.

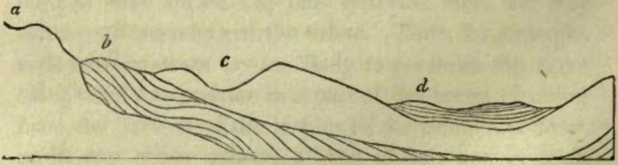
# CHAPTER III.

Discovery of tertiary groups of successive periods — Paris basin — London and Hampshire basins — Tertiary strata of Bordeaux, Piedmont, Touraine, &c. (p. 359.) — Subapennine beds — English crag — More recent deposits of Sicily, &c.

Having in the last chapter considered some of the general rules which may enable the geologist to determine with accuracy the chronological relations of distinct sets of strata, I shall return to the history and discovery of the tertiary strata.

*Paris Basin.* — The first series of deposits belonging to the tertiary class, of which the characters were accurately determined, were those which occur in the neighbourhood of Paris, first described by MM. Cuvier and Brongniart.* They were ascertained to fill a depression in the chalk (as the beds *d*, in Fig. 62., rest

Fig. 62.



*a.* Primary rocks.
*b.* Older secondary formations. *c.* Chalk.
*d.* Tertiary formation.

---

* Environs de Paris, 1811.

upon *c*), and to be composed of different materials, sometimes including the remains of marine and sometimes of fresh-water animals. By the aid of these fossils, several distinct alternations of marine and fresh-water formations were clearly shown to lie superimposed upon each other, and various speculations were hazarded respecting the manner in which the sea had successively abandoned and regained possession of tracts which had been occupied in the intervals by the waters of rivers or lakes. In one of the subordinate members of this Parisian series, a great number of scattered bones and skeletons of land animals were found entombed, the species being perfectly dissimilar to any known to exist, as indeed were those of almost all the animals and plants of which any portions were discovered in the associated deposits.

I must defer, to another part of this work, a more detailed account of this interesting formation, and shall merely observe, in this place, that the investigation of the fossil contents of these beds forms an era in the progress of the science. The French naturalists brought to bear upon their geological researches so much skill and proficiency in comparative anatomy and conchology, as to place in a strong light the importance of the study of organic remains, and the comparatively subordinate interest attached to the exclusive investigation of the structure and mineral ingredients of rocks.

A variety of tertiary formations were soon afterwards found in other parts of Europe, as in the south-east of England, in Italy, Austria, and different parts of France, especially in the basins of the Loire and Gironde, all strongly contrasted with the secondary rocks. As in the latter class many different divisions had been observed to preserve the same mineral characters and organic remains over wide areas, it was natural that an attempt should first be made to trace the different subdivisions of the Parisian tertiary strata throughout Europe, for some of these were not inferior in thickness to several of the secondary formations which had a wide range.

But in this case the analogy, however probable, was not found to hold good; and the error, though almost unavoidable, retarded seriously the progress of geology. As often as a new tertiary group was discovered, as that of Italy, for example, an attempt was invariably made, in the first instance, to discover in what characters it agreed with some one or more subordinate members of the Parisian type. Every fancied point of correspondence was magnified into undue importance, and such trifling circumstances, as the colour of a bed of sand or clay, were dwelt upon as proofs of identity, while the general difference in the mineral character and organic contents of the group from the whole Parisian series was slurred over and thrown into the shade.

By the influence of this illusion, the succession and chronological relations of different tertiary groups were kept out of sight. The difficulty of clearly discerning these arose from the frequent isolation of the position of the tertiary formations before described, since, in proportion as the areas occupied by them are limited, it is rare to discover a place where one set of strata overlap another, in such a manner that the geologist might be enabled to determine the difference of age by direct superposition.

## THE EUROPEAN TERTIARY STRATA FORMED AT SUCCESSIVE PERIODS.

I shall now very briefly enumerate some of the principal steps which eventually led to a conviction of the necessity of referring the European tertiary formations to distinct periods, and the leading data by which such a chronological series may be established.

*London and Hampshire Basins.* — Very soon after the investigation, before alluded to, of the Parisian strata, those of Hampshire and of the basin of the Thames were examined in our own country. Mr. Webster found these English tertiary deposits to repose, like those in France, upon the chalk, or newest rock of the secondary series. He identified a great number of the shells occurring in the British and Parisian strata, and ascertained that, in the Isle of Wight, an alternation of marine and freshwater beds occurred, very analogous to that observed in the basin of the Seine.* But no two sets of strata could well be more dissimilar in mineral composition, and they were only recognized to belong to the same era by aid of the specific identity of their organic remains. The discordance, in other respects, was as complete as could well be imagined, for the principal marine formation in the one country consisted of blue clay, in the other of white limestone; and a variety of curious rocks in the neighbourhood of Paris had no representatives whatever in the south of England.

*Subapennine beds.*— The next important discovery of tertiary strata was in Italy, where Brocchi traced them along the flanks of the Apennines, from one extremity of the peninsula to the other, usually forming a lower range of hills, called by him the Subapennines.* These formations, it is true, had been pointed out by the older Italian writers; and some correct ideas, as we have seen, had been entertained respecting their recent origin, as compared to the inclined secondary rocks on which they rested.† But accurate data were now for the first time collected, for instituting a comparison between them and other members of the great European series of tertiary formations.

---

* Webster in Englefield's Isle of Wight and Geol. Trans., vol. ii. p. 161.

Brocchi came to the conclusion that nearly one-half of several hundred species of fossil shells procured by him from these Subapennine beds were identical with those now living in existing seas, an observation which did not hold true in respect to the organic remains of the Paris basin. It might have been supposed that this important point of discrepancy would at once have engendered great doubt as to the identity, in age, of any part of the Subapennine beds with any one member of the Parisian series; but, for the reasons above alluded to, this objection was not thought of much weight, and it was supposed that a group of strata, called "the upper marine formation," in the basin of the Seine, might be represented by all the Subapennine clays and yellow sand.

*English Crag.* — Several years before, an English naturalist, Mr. Parkinson, had observed that certain shelly strata, in Suffolk, which lay over the blue clay of London, contained distinct fossil species of testacea, and that a considerable portion of these might be identified with species now inhabiting the neighbouring sea.* These overlying beds, which were provincially termed "crag," were of small thickness, and were not regarded as of much geological importance. But, when duly considered, they presented a fact worthy of great attention, viz., the superposition of a tertiary group, enclosing, like the Subapennine beds, a great intermixture of recent species of shells, upon tertiary beds wherein a very few remains of recent or living species were entombed.

---

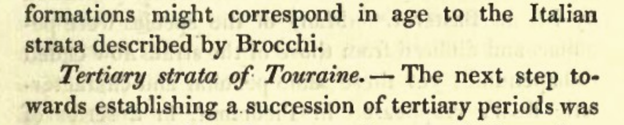
* Conch. Foss. Subap., 1814.

† See Vol. I. p. 73., for opinions of Odoardi in 1761.

Mr. Conybeare, in his excellent classification of the English strata †, placed the crag as the uppermost of the British series; and several geologists began soon to entertain an opinion that this newest of our tertiary formations might correspond in age to the Italian strata described by Brocchi.

*Tertiary strata of Touraine.* — The next step towards establishing a succession of tertiary periods was the evidence adduced to prove that certain formations more recent than the uppermost members of the Parisian series, were also older than the Subapennine beds, so that they constituted deposits of an age intermediate between the two types above alluded to. M. Desnoyers, for example, ascertained that a group

Fig. 63.



C. Chalk and other secondary formations.
*d.* Tertiary formation of Paris basin.
*e.* Superimposed marine tertiary beds of the Loire.

---

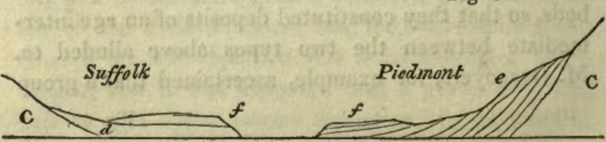
* Geol. Trans., vol. i. p. 324., 1811.

† Outlines of the Geology of England and Wales, 1822.

of marine strata, in Touraine, in the basin of the Loire (*e*, Fig. 63.), rest upon the uppermost subdivision of the Parisian group *d*, which consists of a lacustrine formation, extending continuously throughout a platform which intervenes between the basin of the Seine and that of the Loire. These overlying marine strata, M. Desnoyers assimilated to the English crag, to which they bear some analogy, although their organic remains differ considerably, as will be afterwards shown.

A large tertiary deposit had already been observed in the south-west of France, around Bordeaux and Dax, and a description of its fossils had been published by M. de Basterot.* Many of the species were peculiar, and differed from those of the strata now called Subapennine; yet these same peculiar and characteristic fossils reappeared in Piedmont, in a series of strata inferior in position to the Subapennines (as *e* underlies *f*, Fig. 64.)

Fig. 64.



C. Chalk and older formations.
*d*. London clay (older tertiary).
*e*. Tertiary strata of same age as beds of the Loire.
*f*. Crag and Subapennine tertiary deposits.

This inferior group, *e*, composed principally of green sand, occurs in the hills of Mont Ferrat, and beds of the same age are seen in the valley of the Bormida. They also form the hill of the Superga, near Turin, where Signor Bonelli first formed a large collection of their fossils, and identified them with those discovered near Bordeaux and in the basin of the Gironde.*

---

* Mém, de la Soc. d'Hist. Nat. de Paris, tome ii., 1825.

But we are indebted to M. Deshayes for having proved, by a careful comparison of the entire assemblage of shells found in the above-mentioned localities, in Touraine, in the south-west of France, and in Piedmont, that the whole of these three groups possess the same zoological characters, and belong to the same epoch, as also do the shells described by M. Constant Prevost, as occurring in the basin of Vienna.†

Now the reader will perceive, by reference to the observations above made, and to the accompanying diagrams, that one of the formations of this intervening period, *e*, has been found superimposed upon the highest member of the Parisian series, *d;* while another of the same set has been observed to underlie the Subapennine beds, *f.* Thus the chronological series, *d*, *e*, *f*, is made out, in which the deposits, originally called tertiary, those of the Paris and London basins, for example, occupy the lowest position, and the beds called " the crag," and " the Subapennines," the highest.

*Tertiary strata newer than the Subapennine.* — The fossil remains which characterize each of the three successive periods above alluded to, approximate more nearly to the assemblage of *species* now existing, in proportion as their origin is less remote from our own era, or, in other words, the recent species are always more numerous, and the extinct more rare, in proportion to the low antiquity of the formation. But the discordance between the state of the organic world indicated by the fossils of the Subapennine beds and the actual state of things is still considerable, and we naturally ask, are there no monuments of an intervening period? — no evidences of a gradual passage from one condition of the animate creation to that which now prevails, and which differs so widely?

---

* For farther notice of the labours of Signor Bonelli and others on this subject, see below, ch. v.

† Sur la Constitution, &c. du Bassin de Vienne, Journ. de Phys., Nov. 1820.

It will appear, in the sequel, that such monuments are not wanting, and that there are marine strata entering into the composition of extensive districts, and of hills of no trifling height, which contain the exuviæ of testacea and zoophytes, hardly distinguishable, as a group, from those now peopling the neighbouring seas. Thus the line of demarcation between the actual period and that immediately antecedent, is quite evanescent, and the newest members of the tertiary series will be often found to blend with the formations of the historical era.

In Europe, these modern strata have been found in the district round Naples, in the territory of Otranto and Calabria, and more particularly in the island of Sicily; and the bare enumeration of these places cannot fail to remind the reader, that they belong to regions where the volcano and the earthquake are now active, and where we might have anticipated the discovery of emphatic proofs that the conversion of sea into land had been of frequent occurrence at very modern periods.

# CHAPTER IV.

## DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE SECONDARY AND TERTIARY FORMATIONS MAY HAVE ORIGINATED.

**Secondary series formed when the ocean prevailed; tertiary during the conversion of sea into land, and the growth of a continent — Origin of interruption in the sequence of formations — The areas where new deposits take place are always shifting — Causes of this — Denudation augments the discordance in the age of rocks in contact (p. 371.) — Unconformability of overlying formations — In what manner the shifting of the areas of sedimentary deposition may combine with the gradual extinction and introduction of species to produce a series of deposits having distinct mineral and organic characters.**

I HAVE already glanced at the origin of some of the principal points of difference in the characters of the primary and secondary rocks, and may now briefly consider the relation in which the secondary stand to the tertiary, and the causes of that succession of tertiary formations, which has been described in the last chapter.

It is evident that large parts of Europe must have been sea at one and the same time when different portions of the secondary series were formed, because we find homogeneous mineral masses, including the remains of similar marine animals, referrible to the secondary period, extending over great areas; whereas the detached and isolated position of the tertiary groups, in basins, or depressions bounded by secondary and primary rocks, favours the hypothesis of a sea interrupted by extensive tracts of dry land.

### *State of the Surface when the Secondary Strata were formed.*

Let us consider the changes that must be expected to accompany the gradual conversion of part of the bed of an ocean into a continent, and the different characters that might be imparted to subaqueous deposits formed during the period when the sea prevailed, as contrasted with those that might belong to the subsequent epoch when the land should predominate. First, we may suppose a vast submarine region, such as the bed of the western Atlantic, to receive for ages the turbid waters of several great rivers, like the Amazon, Orinoco, or Mississippi, each draining a considerable continent. The sediment thus introduced might be characterized by a peculiar colour and composition, and the same homogeneous mixture might be spread out over an immense area by the action of a powerful current, like the Gulf-stream. First, one submarine basin, and then another, might be filled, or rendered shallow, by the influx of transported matter, the same species of animals and plants still continuing to inhabit the sea; so that the organic, as well as the mineral characters, might be constant throughout the whole series of deposits.

In another part of the same ocean, let us suppose masses of coralline and shelly limestone to grow, like those of the Pacific, simultaneously over a space several thousand miles in length; and thirty or forty degrees of latitude in breadth, while volcanic eruptions give rise, at different intervals, to igneous rocks, having a common character in different parts of the vast area.

It is evident that, during such a state of a certain quarter of the globe, limestone and other rocks might be formed, and retain a common character over spaces equal to a large portion of Europe.

### *State of the Surface when the Tertiary Groups were formed.*

But, when by the instrumentality of causes now in action, in the manner already described, the area under consideration began to be converted into land, a very different condition of things must succeed. A series of subterranean movements might first give rise to small rocks and islets, and then, by subsequent elevations, to larger islands, by the junction of those first raised. These lands would consist partly of the mineral masses before described, whether coralline, sedimentary, or volcanic, and partly of the subjacent rocks, whatever they may have been, which constituted the original bed of the ocean. Now the degradation of these lands would commence immediately upon their emergence, the waves of the sea undermining the cliffs, and torrents flowing from the surface, so that new strata would begin to form in different places, at the bottom of the still remaining seas; and, in proportion as the lands increased, these deposits would augment.

At length, by the continued rising and sinking of different parts of the bed of the ocean, a number of distinct basins would be formed, wherein different kinds of sediment, each distinguished by some local character, might accumulate. Some of the groups of islands that had first risen would, in the course of ages, become the central mountain ranges of continents, and different lofty chains might thus be characterized by similar rocks of contemporaneous origin, the component strata having originated under analogous circumstances in the ocean before described.

Finally, when large tracts of land existed, there would be a variety of disconnected gulfs, inland seas, and lakes, each receiving the drainage of distinct hydrographical basins, and becoming the receptacles of stratified matter, distinguished by marked peculiarities of mineral composition. The organic remains would also be more varied, for in one locality freshwater species would be imbedded, as in the deposits now forming in the lakes of Switzerland and the north of Italy; in another, marine species, as in the Aral and Caspian; in a third region, gulfs of brackish water would be converted into land, like those of Bothnia and Finland in the Baltic; in a fourth, there might be great fluviatile and marine formations along the borders of a chain of inland seas, like the deltas now growing at the mouths of the Don, Danube, Nile, Po, and Rhone, along the shores of the Sea of Azof, the Euxine, and Mediterranean. These deposits would each partake more or less of the peculiar mineral character of adjoining lands, the degradation of which would supply sediment to the different rivers.

Now, if such be, in a great measure, the distinction between the circumstances under which the secondary and tertiary series originated, it is quite natural that particular tertiary groups should occupy areas of comparatively small extent—that they should frequently consist of littoral and lacustrine deposits—and that they should often contain those admixtures of terrestrial, freshwater, and marine remains, which are so rare in secondary rocks. It might also be expected that the tertiary volcanic formations should be much less exclusively submarine; and this we accordingly find to be the case.

### *Causes of the Superposition of successive Formations having distinct Mineral and Organic Characters.*

But we have still to account for those remarkable breaks in the series of superimposed formations, which are common both to the secondary and tertiary rocks, but are more particularly frequent in the latter. The elucidation of this curious point is the more important, because some geologists appeal to phenomena of this kind in support of their doctrine of sudden revolutions of the globe, and great catastrophes out of the ordinary course of nature.

It is only by carefully considering the combined action of all the causes of change now in operation, whether in the animate or inanimate world, that we can hope to explain such complicated appearances as are exhibited in the general arrangement of mineral masses. In attempting, therefore, to trace the origin of these violations of continuity, we must recur to many of the topics treated of in the two last books, such as the effects of the various agents of decay and reproduction, the imbedding of organic remains, and the extinction of species.

*Shifting of the areas of sedimentary deposition.*— By reverting to our survey of the destroying and renovating agents, it will be seen that the surface of the terraqueous globe may be divided into two parts, one of which is undergoing repair, while the other, constituting, at any one period, by far the larger portion of the whole, is either suffering degradation, or remaining stationary without loss or increment. The reader will assent at once to this proposition, when he reflects that the dry land is, for the most part, wasting by the action of rain, rivers, and torrents; and that part of the bed of the sea is exposed to the excavating action of currents, while the greater part, remote from continents and islands, receives no new deposits. For as a turbid river throws down all its sediment into the first lake which it traverses, so currents flowing from the land or from shoals purge themselves from foreign ingredients in the first deep basin which they enter, and beyond this the blue waters of the ocean may for ages remain clear to the greatest depths. If there are any relics of organic beings at the bottom, they may decompose like the leaves of the forest in autumn, leaving no vestige behind, but merely supplying nourishment, by their decomposition, to succeeding races of marine animals and plants.

The other part of the terraqueous surface is the receptacle of new deposits; and in this portion alone, as I pointed out in the last book, the remains of animals and plants become fossilized. Now the position of this area, where new formations are in progress, and where alone any memorials of the state of organic life are preserved, is always varying, and must for ever continue to vary: and, for the same reason, that portion of the terraqueous globe which is undergoing waste also shifts its position, and these fluctuations depend partly on the action of aqueous, and partly of igneous causes.

In illustration of these positions, I may observe, that the sediment of the Rhone, which is thrown into the Lake of Geneva, is now conveyed to a spot a mile and a half distant from that where it accumulated in the tenth century, and six miles from the point where the delta began originally to form. We may look forward to the period when the lake will be filled up, and then a sudden change will take place in the distribution of the transported matter; for the mud and sand brought down from the Alps will thenceforth, instead of being deposited near Geneva, be carried nearly two hundred miles southwards, where the Rhone enters the Mediterranean.

The additional matter thus borne down to the lower delta of the Rhone would not only accelerate its increase, but might affect the mineral character of the strata there deposited, and thus give rise to an upper group, or subdivision of beds, having a distinct character. But the filling up of a lake, and the consequent transfer of the sediment to a new place, may sometimes give rise to a still more abrupt transition from one group to another; as, for example, in a gulf like that of the St. Lawrence, at the head of which no deposits are now accumulated, the river being purged of all its impurities in its previous course through the Canadian lakes. Should the lowermost of these lakes be at any time filled up with sediment, or laid dry by earthquakes, the waters of the river would thenceforth become turbid, and strata would begin to be deposited in the gulf, where a new formation would immediately overlie the ancient rocks now constituting the bottom. In this case there would be an abrupt passage from the inferior and more ancient, to the newer superimposed formation.

The same sudden coming on of new sedimentary deposits, or the suspension of those which were in progress, must frequently occur in different submarine basins where the prevailing currents are always liable, in the course of ages, to change their direction. Suppose, for instance, a sea to be filling up in the same manner as the Adriatic, by the influx of the Po, Adige, and other rivers. The deltas, after advancing and converging, may at last come within the action of a transverse current, which may arrest the further deposition of matter and sweep it away to a distant point. Such a current now appears to prey upon the delta of the Nile, and to carry eastward the annual accessions of sediment that once added rapidly to the plains of Egypt.

On the other hand, if a current charged with sediment vary its course,—a circumstance which, as I have shown, must happen to all of them in the lapse of ages,—the accumulation of transported matter will at once cease in one region, and commence in another.

Although the causes which occasion the transference of the places of sedimentary deposition are continually in action in every region, yet they are particularly influential where subterranean movements alter, from time to time, the levels of land; and their effect must be very great during the successive elevations and depressions which must be supposed to accompany the rise of a great continent from the deep. A trifling change of level may sometimes throw a current into a new direction, or alter the course of a considerable river. Some tracts will be alternately submerged and laid dry by subterranean movements: in one place a shoal will be formed, whereby the waters will drift matter over spaces where they once threw down their burden, and new cavities will elsewhere be produced, both marine and lacustrine, which will intercept the waters bearing sediment, and thereby stop the supply once carried to some distant basin.

I have before stated, that a few earthquakes of moderate power might cause a subsidence which would connect the Sea of Azof with a large part of Asia now below the level of the ocean.* This vast depression, recently shown by Humboldt to extend over an area of eighteen thousand square leagues, surrounds Lake Aral and the Caspian; on the shores of which seas it sinks in some parts to the depth of about 350 feet below the level of the ocean. The whole area might thus suddenly become the receptacle of new beds of sand and shells, probably differing in mineral character from the masses previously existing in that country; for an exact correspondence could arise only from a precise identity in the whole combination of circumstances which should give rise to formations produced at different periods in the same place.

Without entering into more detailed explanations, the reader will perceive that, according to the laws now governing the aqueous and igneous causes, distinct deposits must, at different periods, be thrown down on various parts of the earth's surface, and that, in the course of ages, the same area may become, again and again, the receptacle of such dissimilar sets of strata. During intervening periods, the space may either remain unaltered, or suffer what is termed *denudation;* in which case a superior set of strata is removed by the power of running water, and subjacent beds are laid bare, as happens wherever a sea encroaches upon a line of coast. By such means, it is obvious that the discordance in age of rocks in contact must often be greatly increased.

The frequent unconformability in the stratification of the inferior and overlying formation is another phenomenon in their arrangement, which may be considered as a natural consequence of those movements that accompany the gradual conversion of part of an ocean into land: for by such convulsions the older set of strata may become rent, shattered, inclined, and contorted to any amount. If the movement cease entirely, before a new deposit is formed in the same tract, the superior strata may repose horizontally upon the dislocated series. But even if the subterranean convulsions continue with increasing violence, the more recent formations must remain comparatively undisturbed, because they cannot share in the derangement previously produced in the older beds; while the latter, on the contrary, cannot fail to participate in all the movements subsequently communicated to the newer.

---

* See p. 148.

*Change of species every where in progress.*—If, then, it be conceded that the combined action of the volcanic and the aqueous forces would give rise to a succession of distinct formations, and that these would be sometimes unconformable, let us next inquire in what manner these groups might become characterized by different assemblages of fossil remains.

I endeavoured to show, in the last book, that the hypothesis of the gradual extinction of certain animals and plants, and the successive introduction of new species, was quite consistent with all that is known of the existing economy of the animate world; and if it is found to be the only hypothesis which is reconcilable with geological phenomena, we shall have strong grounds for conceiving that such is, and has been, the order of nature.

*Fossilization of plants and animals partial.*— We have seen that the causes which limit the duration of species are not confined, at any one time, to a particular part of the globe; and, for the same reason, if we suppose that their place is supplied, from time to time, by new species, we may suppose their introduction to be no less generally in progress. It would follow, therefore, from all the foregoing premises, that the change of species would be in simultaneous operation every where throughout the habitable surface of sea and land; whereas the fossilization of plants and animals must always be confined to those areas where new strata are produced. These areas, as has been proved, are always shifting their position; so that the fossilizing process, by means of which the commemoration of the particular state of the organic world, at any given time, is effected, may be said to move about, visiting and revisiting different tracts in succession.

In order more distinctly to elucidate my idea of the working of this machinery, I shall compare it to a somewhat analogous case that might easily be imagined to occur in the history of human affairs. Let the mortality of the population of a large country represent the successive extinction of species, and the births of new individuals the introduction of new species. While these fluctuations are gradually taking place every where, suppose commissioners to be appointed to visit each province of the country in succession, taking an exact account of the number, names, and individual peculiarities of all the inhabitants, and leaving in each district a register containing a record of this information. If, after the completion of one census, another is immediately made on the same plan, and then another, there will, at last, be a series of statistical documents in each province. When these are arranged in chronological order, the contents of those which stand next to each other will differ according to the length of the intervals of time between the taking of each census. If, for example, there are sixty provinces, and all the registers are made in a single year and renewed annually, the number of births and deaths will be so small, in proportion to the whole of the inhabitants, during the interval between the compiling of two consecutive documents, that the individuals described in such documents will be nearly identical; whereas, if the survey of each of the sixty provinces occupies all the commissioners for a whole year, there will be an almost entire discordance between the persons enumerated in two consecutive registers in the same province. There are undoubtedly other causes besides the mere quantity of time, which may augment or diminish the amount of discrepancy. Thus, at some periods a pestilential disease may have lessened the average duration of human life, or a variety of circumstances may have caused the births to be unusually numerous, and the population to multiply; or, a province may be suddenly colonized by persons migrating from surrounding districts.

I must also remind the reader, that I do not propose the case as an exact parallel to those geological phenomena which I desire to illustrate; for the commissioners are supposed to visit the different provinces in rotation; whereas the commemorating processes by which organic remains become fossilized, although they are always shifting from one area to another, are yet very irregular in their movements. They may abandon and revisit many spaces again and again, before they once approach another district; and, besides this source of irregularity, it may often happen that, while the depositing process is suspended, denudation may take place, which may be compared to the occasional destruction by fire or other causes of some of the statistical documents before mentioned. It is evident that, where such accidents occur, the want of continuity in the series may become indefinitely great, and that the monuments which follow next in succession will by no means be equidistant from each other in point of time.

If this train of reasoning be admitted, the distinctness of the fossil remains, in formations immediately in contact, would be a necessary consequence of the existing laws of sedimentary deposition, and of a constant mortality and renovation of species.

I have already stated, that we should naturally look for a change in the mineral character in strata thrown down at distant intervals in the same place; and, in like manner, we must also expect, for the reason last set forth, to meet occasionally with sudden transitions from one set of organic remains to another. But the causes which have given rise to such differences in mineral characters have no necessary connexion with those which have produced a change in the species of imbedded plants and animals.

When the lowest of two sets of strata are much dislocated throughout a wide area, the upper being undisturbed, there is usually a considerable discordance in the organic remains of the two groups; but the coincidence, in this instance, of the point where the fossils and the stratification change their character, must not be ascribed to the agency of the disturbing forces, as if they had exterminated the living inhabitants of the surface. The *lapse of time* assumed to be requisite for the development of so great a series of subterranean movements has, in such cases, allowed the species also throughout the globe to vary, and hence the two phenomena are usually concomitant.

Although these inferences appear to me very obvious, I am aware that they are directly opposed to many popular theories respecting catastrophes; I shall, therefore, endeavour to illustrate these views still more clearly by another analogous case. Suppose we had discovered two buried cities at the foot of Vesuvius, immediately superimposed upon each other, with a great mass of tuff and lava intervening, just as Portici and Resina, if now covered with ashes, would overlie Herculaneum. An antiquary might possibly be entitled to infer, from the inscriptions on public edifices, that the inhabitants of the inferior and older town were Greeks, and those of the modern Italians. But he would reason very hastily, if he also concluded, from these data, that there had been a sudden change from the Greek to the Italian language in Campania. Suppose he afterwards found *three* buried cities, one above the other, the intermediate one being Roman, while, as in the former example, the lowest was Greek, and the uppermost Italian; he would then perceive the fallacy of his former opinion, and would begin to suspect that the catastrophes, by which the cities were inhumed, might have no relation whatever to the fluctuations in the language of the inhabitants; and that, as the Roman tongue had evidently intervened between the Greek and Italian, so many other dialects may have been spoken in succession, and the passage from the Greek to the Italian may have been very gradual; some terms growing obsolete, while others were introduced from time to time.

If this antiquary could have shown that the volcanic paroxysms of Vesuvius were so governed as that cities should be buried one above the other, just as often as any variation occurred in the language of the inhabitants, then, indeed, the abrupt passage from a Greek to a Roman, and from a Roman to an Italian city, would afford proof of fluctuations no less sudden in the language of the people.

So, in Geology, if we could assume that it is part of the plan of nature to preserve, in every region of the globe, an unbroken series of monuments to commemorate the vicissitudes of the organic creation, we might infer the sudden extirpation of species, and the simultaneous introduction of others, as often as two formations in contact are found to include dissimilar organic fossils. But we must shut our eyes to the whole economy of the existing causes, aqueous, igneous, and organic, if we fail to perceive *that such is not the plan of Nature.*

## CHAPTER V.

### CLASSIFICATION OF TERTIARY FORMATIONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.

Comparative value of different classes of organic remains — Fossil remains of testacea the most important — Necessity of accurately determining species — Four subdivisions of the tertiary epoch proposed — Recent formations (p. 385.) — Newer Pliocene period — Older Pliocene period — Miocene period — — Eocene period — The distinct zoological characters of these periods may not imply sudden changes in the animate creation — Numerical proportion of recent species of shells in different tertiary periods (p. 395.) — The recent strata form a common point of departure in distant regions — Mammiferous remains — Synoptical table of recent and tertiary formations.

In the second chapter I explained the principles on which the relative ages of different formations may be ascertained, and the distinctive character was found to be chiefly derivable from superposition, mineral structure, and organic remains. It is by combining the evidence deducible from all these sources, that we are enabled to determine the chronological succession of distinct formations.

It will be seen, that in proportion as investigations have been extended over a larger area, it has become necessary to intercalate new groups of an age intermediate between those first examined; and we have every reason to expect that, as the science advances, new links in the chain will be supplied, and that the passage from one period to another will become less abrupt. We may even hope, without travelling to distant regions,—without even transgressing the limits of western Europe, to render the series far more complete. The fossil shells, for example, of many of the Subalpine formations, on the northern limits of the plains of the Po, have not yet been carefully collected and compared with those of other countries, and we are almost entirely ignorant of many deposits known to exist in Spain and Portugal.

The views developed in the last chapter, respecting breaks in the sequence of geological monuments, will explain our reasons for anticipating the discovery of intermediate gradations as often as new regions of great extent are explored.

### *Comparative Value of different Classes of Organic Remains.*

In the mean time, we must endeavour to make the most systematic arrangement in our power of those formations which are already known; and in attempting to classify these in chronological order, we must chiefly depend on the evidence afforded by their fossil organic contents. In the execution of this task we have first to consider what class of remains are most useful; for although every kind of fossil animal and plant is interesting, and cannot fail to throw light on the former history of the globe at a certain period, yet those classes of remains which are of rare and casual occurrence are absolutely of no use for the purposes of general classification. If we have plants alone in one assemblage of strata, and the bones of mammalia in another, we can draw no conclusion respecting the number of species of organic beings common to two epochs; or if we have plants and vertebrated animals in one series, and only shells in another, we can form no opinion respecting the remoteness or proximity of the two eras. We might, perhaps, draw some conclusions as to relative antiquity, if we could compare each of the two formations to a third; as, for example, if the species of shells should be almost all identical with those now living, while the plants and vertebrated animals were all extinct; for we might then infer that the shelly deposit was the most recent of the two. But in this case the information would flow from a direct comparison of the species of corresponding orders of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, —of plants with plants, and shells with shells; the only mode of making a systematic arrangement by reference to organic remains.

Although the bones of mammalia in the tertiary strata, and those of reptiles in the secondary, afford us instruction of the most interesting kind, yet the species are too few, and confined to too small a number of localities, to be of much value in characterizing the subdivisions of geological formations. The remains of fish will soon become of much more importance, although the science of fossil ichthyology is still so new that there has been scarcely as yet time for the application of its results to geology. The researches of Mr. Agassiz have recently enabled him to determine the existence in European collections of no less than 850 species, which are distributed largely through deposits of every age. A mere tooth, or a few scales, is often sufficient for the recognition of a species, and the range of species in this class seems, in general, to be very limited in the vertical series; in other words, the same species is rarely common to two or more distinct groups of superimposed strata. Yet these same fish are said to have a very wide horizontal range; that is to say, are found fossil in the same formations in countries extremely distant. Should farther investigation confirm these views of Mr. Agassiz respecting the constancy of their characters and their limitation to particular formations, no class of fossils will contribute more powerfully than fossil fish to the identification of contemporaneous strata in distant parts of the earth.

We can scarcely hope to derive equal assistance from fossil botany, as it is only in a few formations, and in certain kinds of rock, that plants are numerous and well preserved. In these places, however, they throw great light on the former state of the globe at the periods to which they refer. Even in regard to zoophytes, which are so much more abundant in a fossil state than any of the classes above enumerated, we have hitherto been impeded in our endeavour to classify strata by their aid, in consequence of the smallness of the number of recent species which have been examined from those tropical seas where they occur in the greatest profusion. But these difficulties will soon be lessened, and Mr. Ehrenberg's recent investigation of the corals of the Red Sea has greatly advanced this department of science.*

*Fossil remains of testacea of chief importance.*—The testacea then are by far the most important class of organic beings which have left their spoils in the subaqueous deposits; and they have been truly said to be the medals which nature has chiefly selected to record the history of the former changes of the globe. There is scarcely any great series of strata that does not contain some marine or freshwater shells ; and these fossils are often found so entire, especially in the tertiary formations, that when disengaged from the matrix, they have all the appearance of having been just procured from the sea. Their colour, indeed, is usually wanting, but the parts whereon specific characters are founded remain unimpaired; and though the animals themselves are gone, their form and habits can generally be inferred from the shell which covered them.

---

* See Book iii. chap. xviii.

The utility of the testacea, in geological classification, is greatly enhanced by the circumstance that some forms are proper to the sea, others to the land, and others to fresh water. Rivers scarcely ever fail to carry down into their deltas some land shells, together with species which are at once fluviatile and lacustrine. The Rhone, for example, receives annually, from the Durance, many shells which are drifted in an entire state from the higher Alps of Dauphiny ; and these species, such as *Bulimus montanus*, are carried down into the delta of the Rhone to a climate very different from that of their native habitation. The young hermit crabs may often be seen on the shores of the Mediterranean, near the mouth of the Rhone, inhabiting these univalves, brought down to them from so great a distance.* At the same time that some freshwater and land shells are carried into the sea, other individuals of the same species become fossil in inland lakes, and by this means we learn what species of freshwater and marine testacea coexisted at particular eras. We also make out the connexion between various plants and mammifers imbedded in those lacustrine deposits, and the testacea which lived at the same time in the ocean.

---

* M. Marcel de Serres pointed out this curious fact to me when I visited Montpellier, July, 1828.

There are two other characters of the molluscous animals which render them extremely valuable in settling chronological questions in Geology. The first of these is a wide geographical range, and the second (probably a consequence of the former) is the superior duration of species in this class. It is evident that if the habitation of a species be very local, it cannot aid us greatly in establishing the contemporaneous origin of distant groups of strata, in the manner pointed out in the last chapter; and if a wide geographical range be useful in connecting formations far separated in space, the longevity of species is no less serviceable in establishing the relations of strata considerably distant from each other in point of time.

I shall revert in the sequel to the curious fact, that in tracing back the series of tertiary deposits from the newer to the older, many existing species of testacea accompany us after the disappearance of all fossil remains of the recent mammalia and fish. We even find the skeletons of extinct quadrupeds in deposits wherein all the land and freshwater shells are of living species.*

*Necessity of accurately determining species.* — The reader will already perceive that the systematic arrangement of strata, so far as it rests on organic remains, must depend essentially on the accurate determination of *species;* and the geologist must therefore have recourse to the ablest naturalists, devoted to the study of certain departments of organic nature. It is scarcely possible that they who are continually employed in laborious investigations in the field, and in ascertaining the relative position and characters of mineral masses, should have leisure to acquire a profound knowledge of fossil osteology, conchology, and other branches of zoological inquiry; but it is desirable that in these sciences they should become acquainted with the principles at least on which specific characters are determined, and the habits of species inferred from their peculiar forms.

---

* See Vol. I. p. 142., and Book iv. chap. xi.

When the specimens of shells are in an imperfect state of preservation, or happen to belong to genera in which it is difficult to decide on the species, except the inhabitant itself be present, or when any other grounds of ambiguity arise, we must reject, or lay small stress upon, the evidence, lest we vitiate our general results. We cannot do better than consider the steps by which the science of botanical geography has reached its present stage of advancement, and endeavour to introduce the same severe comparison of the specific characters, in drawing our geological inferences.

## SUBDIVISIONS OF THE TERTIARY EPOCH.

I shall now proceed to consider the subdivisions of tertiary strata which may be founded on the results of a comparison of their respective fossils, and to give names to the periods to which they may be severally referred. But, first, it will be necessary to explain the difference between the *tertiary* phenomena and those described in the last two books. In the present work all those geological monuments are called tertiary which are newer than the secondary formations, and which on the other hand cannot be proved to have originated since the earth was inhabited by man. Part of the changes, whether of the animate or inanimate world, considered in the preceding books, was ascertained by historical testimony to have taken place within the human epoch; as, for example, the accumulation of the newer portion of the deltas of the Po, Rhone, and Nile. Another part, where history was silent, was proved to belong to the same epoch by the evidence of the fossil remains of man or his works. All formations, whether igneous or aqueous, which can be shown by any such proofs to be of a date posterior to the introduction of man, will be called *Recent.* Some authors have applied the term *contemporaneous* in the same sense; but as this word is so frequently in use to express the synchronous origin of distinct rocks of every age, it would be a source of great inconvenience and ambiguity if we were to confine it to a technical meaning.

The European tertiary strata may be referred to four successive periods, each characterized by containing a very different proportion of fossil shells of *recent* species. I have considered that it may be useful to distinguish these four periods by the following terms: Newer Pliocene, Older Pliocene, Miocene, and Eocene. But, before explaining their etymology, and the geological characters of the several groups which they designate, it will be proper to point out some of the steps by which I was led to adopt a fourfold division, and to acknowledge the co-operation of other geologists, who about the same time, and from independent observations, had come to conclusions very similar to my own.

Before I visited Turin in 1828, in company with Mr. Murchison, I had already conceived the idea of classing the different tertiary groups by reference to the proportional number of recent species found fossil in each. Signor Bonelli then informed us, that the fossil shells of the hill of the Superga differed as a group from those of Parma and other localities of the Subapennine beds of northern Italy; and, on the other hand, that the characteristic shells of the Superga agreed with the species found at Bordeaux and other parts of the south of France. We were the more struck with this remark, as we had already inferred that the highly-inclined strata of the valley of the Bormida, which agree with those of the Superga, were older than the more horizontal Subapennine marls, by which the plains of the Tanaro and the Po are skirted. At the same time, Signor Bonelli called my attention to suites of fossil shells in the museum of Turin, of species common to the Subapennine beds and to the Mediterranean; and pointed out that not only the ordinary type of the species, but even the different varieties, had their counterparts both in the fossil and recent series. I afterwards examined a beautiful collection of the tertiary shells of Italy at Parma, in the cabinets of Professor Guidotti, who computed, on a loose estimate, that there were about thirty per cent. of living species in the Subapennine beds bordering the plains of the Po. I then continued my inquiries on the same subject at Florence, Sienna, and Rome; and on my arrival at Naples, became acquainted with Signor O. G. Costa, who had examined the fossil shells of Otranto and Calabria, and had collected many recent testacea from the seas surrounding the Calabrian coasts. His comparison of the fossil and living species had led him to a very different result respecting the southern extremity of Italy, from that to which Signors Bonelli and Guidotti had arrived in regard to the north, for he was of opinion that few of the tertiary shells were of extinct species. In confirmation of this view, he showed me a collection of fossil shells from the territory of Otranto, in which nearly all the species were recent.

I then visited the Island of Ischia, the neighbourhood of Naples, and afterwards a great part of Sicily, and was soon satisfied that in all these countries the tertiary strata contained so many shells of living species that the extinct species formed rather the exception to the general rule, whereas in the tertiary strata near Turin it was decidedly more difficult to find a recent than an extinct fossil species.

On my return to Turin, towards the close of the same year (1828), I communicated the results of my observations to Signor Bonelli, who undertook to draw up for me a comparative table of the characteristic shells common to the tertiary green-sand of the Superga, and to the strata of the south of France around Bordeaux and Dax; intending me to publish the table in my work. But the death of this amiable and zealous naturalist soon deprived me of his assistance. I had then (December, 1828) fully decided on attempting to establish four subdivisions of the tertiary epoch, considering the basin of Paris and London to be the type of the first; the beds of the Superga of the second; the Subapennine strata of northern Italy of the third; and southern Italy and the Val di Noto, in Sicily, of the fourth. I was also convinced that I had seen proofs during my tour in Auvergne, Tuscany, and Sicily, of volcanic rocks contemporary with the sedimentary strata of three, if not of all, the above periods.

On my return to Paris, in February, 1829, I communicated to M. Desnoyers some of the new views to which my examination of Sicily had led me, and my intention to attempt a classification of the different tertiary formations in chronological order, by reference to the comparative proportion of living species of shells found fossil in each. He informed me that, during my tour, he had been employed in printing the first part of his memoir, not yet published, on "the Tertiary Formations more recent than the Paris Basin," in which he had insisted on the doctrine "of the succession of tertiary formations of different ages." At the end of the first part of his memoir, which was published before I left Paris, he annexed a note on the accordance of many of my views with his own, and he announced my intention of arranging the tertiary formations chronologically, according to the relative number of fossils in each group which were identifiable with species now living.*

At the same time I learned from M. Desnoyers, that M. Deshayes had previously, by the mere inspection of fossil shells in his extensive museum, convinced himself that the different tertiary formations might be arranged in a chronological series. I accordingly lost no time in seeing M. Deshayes, who explained to me the data on which he considered that three tertiary periods might be established, the two first of which corresponded to two of those which I was prepared to adopt (the Eocene and the Miocene), and the last embracing the Subapennine beds as distinguished from those of Bordeaux and the Superga. He had not then separated the Subapennine beds from those of Sicily, to which I have given the name of "Newer Pliocene."

---

* See Ann. des Sci. Nat., xvi. p. 214.

On my return to Paris in September, 1830, I studied for six weeks in the museum of M. Deshayes, examining his collection of fossil and recent shells, and profiting by his instructions in conchology. I then requested him to furnish me with lists of those species of shells which were common to two or more tertiary periods, as also the names of those known to occur both in some tertiary strata and in a living state. It was agreed that this information should be communicated in a tabular form; and after we had laboured together, and made several modifications of the plan first proposed the tables were executed by M. Deshayes, so as to appear in his name in the third volume of my first edition, published in the beginning of the year 1833. These valuable tables contained the results of the examination of no less than 8000 tertiary and recent shells, and on such data the classification adopted in this work has been principally founded. It has not been thought desirable to reprint these tables, which have already had an extensive circulation among geologists; for I was unwilling again to allot so much space to details which belong more strictly to the province of fossil chonchology.

When I published my third volume I had not studied the second volume of Professor Bronn's "Journey in Italy," published at Heidelberg in December, 1831, in which he had remarked that the distinctive character of the older as compared to the newer tertiary formations of Italy, consisted in the much smaller proportion of living species of shells found fossil in the older beds.* He had also stated, in the same volume (p. 674), that the shells of the Superga beds have a nearer connexion with those of Bordeaux than with any other tertiary formation.

---

* Brown's Reisen, &c. ii. p. 678.

To resume my classification: — the tertiary strata may be divided into four groups, in the older of which we find an extremely small number of fossils identifiable with species now living*; whereas on approaching the superior and newer sets, we find the remains of recent testacea in abundance. In no instance where we have an opportunity of observing two distinct formations in contact, the one superimposed upon the other, do we meet with an assemblage of organic remains in the uppermost differing more widely from the existing creation than the fossils of the inferior group. If there is occasionally an apparent exception to the rule, it is only where the remains belong to distinct classes of the animal kingdom; as, for example, where a deposit containing the bones of quadrupeds for the most part extinct overlies a stratum in which the imbedded shells are mostly of recent species — such exceptions seem to point to a difference in the comparative duration of species in different classes, but do not invalidate the general proposition before laid down.

*Newer Pliocene period.* — The latest of the four periods before alluded to is that which immediately preceded the Recent era. To this more modern period may be referred a portion of the strata of Sicily, the district round Naples, and several others to be considered in the sequel. They are characterized by a great preponderance of fossil shells referrible to species still living, and may be called the Newer Pliocene strata, the term Pliocene, or " more recent," being derived from πλειων, major, and καινος, recens, as a large, often by far the largest, part of the fossil shells are of recent species.[*]

---

* See p. 357.

Out of 226 fossil species brought from the Sicilian beds above alluded to, M. Deshayes found that no less than 216 were of species still living, and for the most part in the Mediterranean, whereas ten only were of extinct or unknown species. I do not imagine that any of the groups referred to this period in the present work contain much more than the proportion of one in ten of extinct species of shells. Nevertheless, the antiquity of some Newer Pliocene strata of Sicily, as contrasted with our most remote historical eras, must be very great, embracing perhaps myriads of years.[†] There are no data for supposing that there is any break, or strong line of demarcation, between the strata and fossils of this and the Recent epoch; but, on the contrary, the monuments of the one seem to pass insensibly into those of the other.

*Older Pliocene period.*—The formations termed Subapennine in the north of Italy, and in Tuscany, contain among their fossil shells a large number which have been identified with living species. The proportion of *recent* shells usually approaches to one half. Out of 569 species examined from these strata in Italy, 238 were found to be still living, and 331 extinct or unknown. Out of 111 from the English crag, M. Deshayes determined forty-five to be recent species, and sixty-six to be extinct or unknown. The relative position of these Older Pliocene beds is explained in Fig. 64. p. 360., where they are designated by the letter *f*.

---

[*] In this and the other names which I have adopted, it will be seen that the nomenclature has always reference to the relative proportion of recent species in the fossils of each period. In the terms Pliocene, Miocene, and Eocene, the Greek diphthongs *ei* and *ai* are changed into the vowels *i* and *e*, in conformity with the idiom of our language. My friend, the Rev. W. Whewell, to whom I have been much indebted for assisting me in inventing and anglicizing these terms, reminds me that we have Encenia, an inaugural ceremony, derived from *εν* and *καινος*, recens; and as examples of the conversion of *ei* into *i*, we have icosahedron.

[†] See chapters vi. vii. viii. ix.

The plurality of species indicated by the name Pliocene must not in this instance be understood to imply an absolute majority of *recent* fossil shells in all cases, but a comparative preponderance whenever the Pliocene are contrasted with strata of the period immediately preceding.

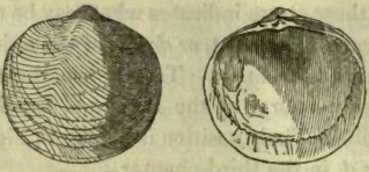
*Miocene period.*—This antecedent tertiary epoch I shall name Miocene, or "less recent," from μειων, minor, and καινος, recens, a small minority only of fossil shells imbedded in its formations being referrible to living species. After examining 1021 Miocene shells, M. Deshayes found that 176 only were recent, being in proportion of rather more than seventeen in one hundred. As there are a certain number of fossil species which are exclusively confined to the Pliocene period, so also there are many shells equally characteristic of the Miocene. The species which pass from the Miocene into the Pliocene period, or which are common to both, are in number 196, of which 114 are living, and eighty-two extinct. The Miocene strata are largely developed in Touraine, and in the south of France near Bordeaux, in Piedmont, in the basin of Vienna, and other localities, and their relative position has been shown in Figs. 63. and 64., where they are designated by the letter *e*.

*Eocene period.*—The period next antecedent may be called Eocene, from ἠως, aurora, and καινος, recens, because the very small proportion of living species contained in these strata indicates what may be considered the first commencement, or *dawn*, of the existing state of the animate creation. To this era the formations first called tertiary, of the Paris and London basins, are referrible. Their position is shown in Figs. 63. and 64., letter *d*, in the third chapter.

The total number of fossil shells of this period already known, when the tables of M. Deshayes, before alluded to, were constructed, was 1238, of which number forty-two only are living species, being in the proportion of nearly three and a half in one hundred. Of fossil species, not known as recent, forty-two were found to be common to the Eocene and Miocene epochs.

The present geographical distribution of those recent species which are found fossil in formations of such high antiquity as those of the Paris and London basins, is a subject of the highest interest. In the more modern formations, where so large a proportion of the fossil shells belong to species still living, they also belong, for the most part, to species now inhabiting the seas immediately adjoining the countries where they occur fossil; whereas the recent species, found in the older tertiary strata, are frequently inhabitants of distant latitudes, and usually of warmer climates. Of the forty-two Eocene species, or those found in the earliest tertiary strata, which occur fossil in England, France, and Belgium, and are at the same time still living, about half now inhabit the seas within or near the tropics, and almost all the rest are inhabitants of the more southern and warmer parts of Europe. If some Eocene species still flourish in the same latitudes where they are found fossil, they are species which, like *Lucina divaricata*, are now found in many seas,

Fig. 65.



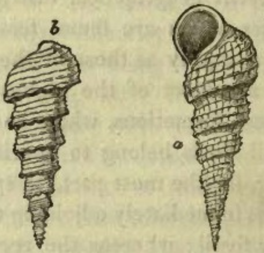
*Lucina divaricata.*

even those of very distant quarters of the globe; and this wide geographical range indicates a capacity of enduring a variety of external circumstances, which may enable a species to survive considerable changes of climate and other revolutions of the earth's surface. One fluviatile species (*Melania inquinata*), fossil in the Paris basin, is now known only in the Philippine Islands; and, during the lowering of the temperature of certain parts of the earth's surface, may perhaps have escaped destruction by migrating to the south. I have pointed out in the third book how rapidly the eggs of freshwater species might, by the instrumentality of water-fowl, be transported from one region to another.* Other Eocene species, which still survive

Fig. 66.

*a* Variety from the Soissonnais which resembles the recent.

*b* Tuberculated variety.



*Melania inquinata as found fossil in Paris basin. One third less than natural size.*

---

* See p. 78.

and range from the temperate zone to the equator, may formerly have extended from the pole to the temperate zone; and what was once the southern limit of their range may now be the most northern.

Even if geologists had not established several remarkable facts in attestation of the longevity of certain tertiary species, we might still have anticipated that the duration of the living species of aquatic and terrestrial testacea would be very unequal. For it is clear that those which have a wide range, and inhabit many different regions and climates, may survive the influence of destroying causes, which might extirpate the greater part of species at present their contemporaries. The increase of existing species, and gradual disappearance of the extinct, as we trace the series of formations from the older to the newer, is somewhat analogous, as was before observed, to the fluctuations of a population such as might be recorded at successive periods, from the time when the oldest of the individuals now living was born to the present moment; and those Eocene testacea which still flourish may be said to have outlived several successive states of the organic world, just as Nestor survived three generations of men.

It appears, then, that the numerical proportion of recent to extinct species of fossil shells in the different tertiary periods may be thus expressed. — In the

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Newer Pliocene period about | 90 to 95 | per cent. of *recent* fossils.* |
| Older Pliocene period . . . | 35 to 50 | |
| Miocene period . . . . . . | 17 | |
| Eocene period . . . . . . | 3½ | |

---

* The new terms may be remembered by *Pl*iocene recalling *Plus, more; Mi*ocene, *Mi*nus, *less;* and *E*ocene, the *E*ast, or dawn.

These numbers, however, must be regarded merely as the results obtained from a careful examination of the first groups which chance has thrown in our way, or which lie in the most accessible parts of Europe.

The distribution of the fossil species from which the above results were obtained by M. Deshayes was as follows: —

| | |
|---|---|
| In the formations of the Pliocene periods, older and newer . . . . . . | 777 |
| In the Miocene . . . . . . | 1021 |
| In the Eocene . . . . . . | 1238 |
| | 3036 |

Only seventeen species of shells were found to be common to the three epochs, which may therefore be said to characterize the entire tertiary formations of Europe. Thirteen of them are species still living, while four are known only as fossil. The thirteen living species are —

1. Dentalium entalis.
2. ——— strangulatum.
3. Fissurella græca.
4. Bulla lignaria.
5. Rissoa cochlearella.
6. Murex fistulosus.
7. ——— tubifer.
8. Polymorphina gibba.
9. Triloculina oblonga.
10. Lucina divaricata.
11. ——— gibbosula.
12. Isocardia cor.
13. Nucula margaritacca.

The four extinct species are —

1. Dentalium coarctatum.
2. Tornatella inflata.
3. Bulimus terebellatus.
4. Corbula complanata.

In thus selecting the proportional number of recent to extinct species of shells as a useful term of comparison for successive tertiary groups, or as one from which a convenient nomenclature may be derived, I have no wish to exalt the mere per-centage of living species of fossil shells into the leading characteristic of each group. The Eocene strata of Paris and London, for example, are marked by the presence of a vast variety of peculiar *extinct* species of testacea, as well as of other animal and vegetable remains, in comparison of which the proportion of living species is a character of subordinate importance. At the same time it should be observed, that had the geologist collected the fossils of the crag of Norfolk, the blue clay of London, and the coarse white limestone of Paris, and then considered these formations merely with reference to the number of recent shells contained in each, he would have seen, by this character alone, that the Parisian and London strata differed widely from the crag, and agreed very closely with each other. Afterwards, on extending his examination to the *extinct* species, he would find that those of the Paris and London formations also corresponded, and formed together an assemblage very distinct from the *extinct* species in the crag. In this and many other cases where our zoological investigations are far advanced, a reference to the proportion of recent species would lead to the same general classifications, as the mere consideration of extinct testacea in different tertiary formations.

Many geologists are desirous of connecting divisions such as those above pointed out with sudden and violent interruptions to the ordinary course of events, and they regard them as indicative of successive changes in the organic world, accompanying revolutions equally important in the physical geography of the earth's surface. But I have already attempted to show, that such apparent breaks in the geological series may be accounted for partly by the mode in which the commemorative processes operate, partly by the removal of strata by denudation, and that they arise, in part, from the small progress which we have hitherto made in the discovery and study of such deposits as are preserved.*

From the experience of the last few years, we may anticipate the discovery of many intermediate gradations between the boundary lines first drawn; and if formations are brought to light intervening between the Eocene and Miocene, or between those of the last period and the Pliocene, we may still find an appropriate place for all, by forming subdivisions, on the same principle as that which has determined the separation of the lower from the upper Pliocene groups. Thus, for example, we might have three divisions of the Eocene epoch, — the older, middle, and newer; and three similar subdivisions, both of the Miocene and Pliocene epochs. In that case, the formations of the middle period must be considered as the types from which the assemblage of organic remains in the groups on both sides will diverge.

When we institute a new genus in natural history, and intend it to occupy a place intermediate between two genera previously established, as the genus B, for example, between A and C, we select a particular species *b*, as the generic type of B, and then determine to refer all other species to the same genus, provided they approach nearer to *b* than the types of A or C. On comparing together the species of B, we discover that they deviate in various ways and degrees from the typical species, some of them approaching somewhat nearer to the characters of the genus A which precedes, others to C which stands next, in the series. By due attention to these shades of difference we may arrange all the congeners in order, according to their natural affinities.

---

* See p. 367.

In like manner, when we desire to class geological formations in a chronological series, we may select a certain set of strata as *b*, and consider it as typical of a particular period B. We may then refer other formations to B, if they resemble in their organic contents the normal group *b* more nearly than the types of the antecedent or subsequent epochs A and C. And we may consider the strata which in departing slightly from *b* approximate to A as being the older divisions of the period B, and those which depart from the type *b* in the direction of C as the newer deposits of the same era.

In determining originally the order of succession of A, B, and C, we must be guided, as far as possible, by the evidence of superposition by which the relative age of the principal groups may generally be decided with certainty.

It must not be inferred from any thing above advanced, that the fourfold division of the tertiary epoch is purely arbitrary, or that any other number of periods might in the present state of the science have been chosen with equal propriety. For, though it be true that zoological periods in geology, like genera and orders in Natural History, are purely artificial divisions; yet we have at present no alternative but to accept those lines of separation which we find in the series of monuments first brought to light.

It is a comparatively easy task to establish genera in departments of zoology and botany which have been enriched with only a small number of species, and where there is as yet no tendency in one set of characters to pass almost insensibly, by a multitude of connecting links, into another. So, in geology, our facilities of systematic arrangement are perhaps greater now than they will be hereafter, when we shall be under the necessity of intercalating new periods between those first established.

In conclusion, I may observe, that although the lapse of ages comprised within a single period is very much narrowed by the fourfold subdivision above explained, yet when all the Eocene or Miocene deposits are said to be *contemporaneous*, this term must be received with a good deal of latitude. Considerable intervals of time may have elapsed without giving rise to any marked distinction in the imbedded organic remains.

Suppose the growth of the delta of the Nile to cease from this moment, and some new river to begin to transport sediment into the Mediterranean at any other point, and to form a delta in the course of many thousand years, this last formation might contain the same fossils as the marine and fluviatile deposits of the Nile previously accumulated in Lower Egypt; the difference at least might be so trifling that future geologists would regard them as contemporaneous, if they followed the same rules of classification as those laid down in this chapter.

*The recent strata form a common point of departure in all countries.* — We derive one great advantage from beginning our classification of formations by a comparison of the fossils of the more recent strata with the species now living; namely, the acquisition of a common point of departure in every region of the globe. Thus, for example, if strata should be discovered in

India or South America, containing the same small proportion of recent shells as are found in the Paris basin, *they* also might be termed Eocene; and, on analogous data, an approximation might be made to the relative dates of strata placed in the arctic and tropical regions, or the comparative age might be ascertained of European deposits and those at the antipodes. There might be no species common to the two groups; yet we might make some approach, perhaps a near one, towards determining their relative age from the common relation which they bear to the existing state of the animate creation. We may afterwards avail ourselves of the dates thus established, as eras to which the monuments of preceding periods may be referred.

*Mammiferous remains of successive tertiary eras.* — But although a thirtieth part of the Eocene testacea have been identified with species now living, none of the associated mammiferous remains belong to species which now exist, either in Europe or elsewhere. Some of these equalled the horse, and others the rhinoceros, in size; and they could not possibly have escaped observation, had they survived down to our time. More than forty of these Eocene mammifers are referrible to a particular division of the order Pachydermata, which has now only four living representatives on the globe, namely, three tapirs and the Daman of the Cape. Of those forty fossil species, even the genera are distinct from any which have been established for the classification of living animals.

In the Miocene mammalia we find a few of the generic forms most frequent in the Eocene strata associated with some of those now existing, and in the Pliocene we find an intermixture of extinct and recent species of quadrupeds. There is, therefore, a considerable degree of accordance between the results deducible from an examination of the fossil testacea, and those derived from the mammiferous fossils. But although the latter are more important in respect to the unequivocal evidence afforded by them of the extinction of species, yet, for reasons before explained, they are of comparatively small value in the general classification of strata in geology.*

We have seen that the imbedding of mammiferous remains depends on rare casualties, and that they are, for the most part, preserved in detached alluvium covering the emerged land, or in osseous breccias and stalagmites formed in caverns and fissures, or in isolated lacustrine formations.† Such fissures and caves may probably have remained open during successive geological periods; and the alluvions, spread over the surface, may have been disturbed again and again, until the mammalia of successive epochs were mingled and confounded together. Hence we must be careful, when we endeavour to refer the remains of mammalia to certain tertiary periods, that we ascertain, not only their association with testacea of which the date is known, but, also, that the remains were intermixed in such a manner as to leave no doubt of the former co-existence of the species.

In the next page will be found a Synoptical Table of the Recent and Tertiary Formations alluded to in this and the following chapters.

---

* See p. 380.

† Book iii. chaps. xiii. and xiv.

## *Synoptical Table of Recent and Tertiary Formations.*

| PERIODS. | | Character of Formations. | Localities of the different Formations. |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. RECENT. | . . . . . | Marine. | Coral formations of Pacific.<br>Delta of Po, Ganges, Mississippi. |
| | | Freshwater. | Modern deposits in Lake Superior — Lake of Geneva — Marl lakes of Scotland — Italian travertin. |
| | | Volcanic. | Jorullo — Monte Nuovo — Modern lavas of Iceland, Etna, Vesuvius. |
| II. TERTIARY. | 1. Newer Pliocene. | Marine. | Strata of the Val di Noto in Sicily. Ischia. |
| | | Freshwater. | Valley of the Elsa around Colle in Tuscany. |
| | | Volcanic. | Older parts of Vesuvius, Etna, and Ischia — Volcanic rocks of the Val di Noto in Sicily. |
| | 2. Older Pliocene. | Marine. | Northern Subapennine formations, as at Parma, Asti, Sienna, Perpignan, Nice — English Crag. |
| | | Freshwater. | Alternating with marine beds near the town of Sienna. |
| | | Volcanic. | Volcanos of Tuscany and Campagna di Roma. |
| | 3. Miocene. | Marine. | Strata of Touraine, Bordeaux, Valley of the Bormida, and the Superga near Turin — Basin of Vienna. |
| | | Freshwater. | Alternating with marine at Saucats, twelve miles south of Bordeaux. |
| | | Volcanic. | Hungarian and Transylvanian volcanic rocks.<br>Part of the volcanos of Auvergne, Cantal, and Velay? |
| | 4. Eocene. | Marine. | Paris and London Basins. |
| | | Freshwater. | Alternating with marine in Paris basin — Isle of Wight — purely lacustrine in Auvergne, Cantal, and Velay. |
| | | Volcanic. | Oldest part of volcanic rocks of Auvergne. |

# CHAPTER VI.

## NEWER PLIOCENE FORMATIONS — SICILY.

Reasons for considering, in the first place, the more modern periods — Geological structure of Sicily — Formations of the Val di Noto — Divisible into three groups — Great limestone — Schistose and arenaceous limestone — Blue marl with shells — Strata subjacent to the above — Volcanic rocks of the Val di Noto (p. 411.)— Dikes — Tuffs and Peperinos —Volcanic conglomerates — Proofs of long intervals between volcanic eruptions — Dip and direction of Newer Pliocene strata of Sicily.

Having endeavoured, in the last chapter, to explain the principles on which the different tertiary formations may be arranged in chronological order, I shall now proceed to consider in detail the newest division, or that which, from its containing the greatest proportion of recent shells of any of the four tertiary groups, has been named the Newer Pliocene.*

It may appear, that I reverse the natural order of historical research by thus describing, in the first place, the monuments of a period which immediately preceded our own era, and then passing to the events of antecedent ages. But, in the present state of geological science, this retrospective order of inquiry is the only one which can conduct us gradually from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the more complex phenomena. I have already explained my reasons for commencing with an examination, in the last two books, of the events of the *recent* epoch, from which the greater number of rules of interpretation in geology may be derived. The formations of the Newer Pliocene period will be considered next in order, because these have undergone the least degree of alteration, both in position and internal structure, subsequently to their origin. They are monuments of which the characters are more easily deciphered than those belonging to more remote periods, for they have been less mutilated by the hand of time. The organic remains, more especially of this era, are most important, not only as being in a more perfect state of preservation, but also as being chiefly referrible to species now living; so that their habits are known to us by direct comparison, and not merely by inference from analogy, as in the case of extinct species.

---

* See pp. 390. and 395.

*Geological structure of Sicily.*—I shall first describe an extensive district in Sicily, where the Newer Pliocene strata are largely developed, and where they are raised to considerable heights above the level of the sea. After presenting the reader with a view of these formations, I shall endeavour to explain the manner in which they originated, and shall speculate on the subterranean changes of which their present position affords evidence.

The island of Sicily consists partly of primary and secondary rocks, which occupy, perhaps, about two thirds of its superficial area; and the remaining part is covered by tertiary formations, which are of great extent in the southern and central parts of the island, while portions are found bordering nearly the whole of the coasts.

*Formations of the Val di Noto.*—If we first turn our attention to the Val di Noto (see map, Pl. VII.), a district which intervenes between Etna and the southern promontory of Sicily, we find a considerable tract, containing within it hills which are from one to two thousand feet in height, entirely composed of limestone, marl, sandstone, and associated volcanic rocks, which belong to the Newer Pliocene era. The recent shells of the Mediterranean abound throughout the sedimentary strata, and there are abundant proofs that the igneous rocks were the produce of successive submarine eruptions, repeated at intervals during the time when the subaqueous formations were in progress.

These rising grounds of the Val di Noto are separated from the cone of Etna, and the marine strata whereon it rests, by the low level plain of Catania, just elevated above the level of the sea, and watered by the Simeto. The traveller who passes from Catania to Syracuse has an opportunity of observing, on the sides of the valley, many deep sections of the modern formations above described, especially if he makes a slight detour by Sortino and the valley of Pentalica.

The whole series of strata, in the Val di Noto, is divisible into three principal groups, exclusive of the associated volcanic rocks. The uppermost mass consists of limestone, which sometimes acquires the enormous thickness of seven or eight hundred feet, below which is a series much inferior in thickness, consisting of a calcareous sandstone, conglomerate and schistose limestone, and beneath this again blue marl. The whole of the above groups contain shells and zoophytes, nearly all of which are referrible to species now inhabiting the contiguous sea.

*Great limestone formation* (*a*, Fig. 67.).—In mineral character this rock often corresponds to the yellowish white building-stone of Paris, well known by the name of *Calcaire grossier*, but it often passes into a much more compact stone. In the deep ravine-like valleys of Sortino and Pentalica, it is seen in nearly horizontal strata, as solid and as regularly bedded as the greater part of our ancient secondary formations. It abounds in natural caverns, which, in many places, as in the valley of Pentalica, have been enlarged by artificial excavations.

Fig. 67.

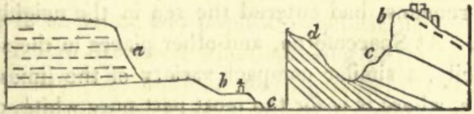
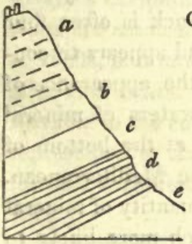

Syracuse. Girgenti.

Fig. 68.


Castrogiovanni.

*a*. Great limestone of Val di Noto.
*b*. Schistose and arenaceous limestone of Floridia.
*c*. Blue marl with shells.
*d*. White laminated marl.
*e*. Blue clay and gypsum, without shells.

The shells in the limestone are often very indistinct, sometimes nothing but casts remaining; but in many localities, especially where there is a slight intermixture of volcanic sand, they are more entire, and, as I have already stated, can almost all be identified with recent Mediterranean testacea. Several species of the genus Pecten are exceedingly numerous, particularly the large scallop (*P. Jacobæus*), now so common on the coasts of Sicily. The shells which I collected from this limestone at Syracuse, Villasmonde, Militello (V. di Noto), and Girgenti, have been examined by M.

Deshayes, and found, with three or four exceptions, to be all referrible to species now living.*

The mineral characters of this great calcareous formation vary considerably in different parts of the island. In the south near the town of Noto, the rock puts on the compactness, together with the spheroidal concretionary structure, of some of the Italian travertins. At the same place, also, it contains the leaves of plants and reeds, as if a stream of fresh water, charged with carbonate of lime and terrestrial vegetable remains, had entered the sea in the neighbourhood. At Spaccaforno, and other places in the south of Sicily, a similar compact variety of the limestone occurs, where it is for the most part pure white, often very thick bedded, and occasionally without any lines of stratification. This hard white rock is often four or five hundred feet in thickness, and appears to contain no fossil shells. It has much the appearance of having been precipitated from the waters of mineral springs, such as frequently rise up at the bottom of the sea in the volcanic regions of the Mediterranean. As these springs give out an equal quantity of mineral matter at all seasons, they are much more likely to give rise to unstratified masses, than a river which is swoln and charged with sedimentary matter of different kinds, and in unequal quantities, at particular seasons of the year.

---

* I procured at Villasmonde, seven species; at Militello, ten; in the limestone of Girgenti, of which the ancient temples are built, ten species; from the limestone and subjacent clay at Syracuse, twenty-six species; in the limestone and clay near Palermo, also belonging to the Newer Pliocene formation, one hundred species, the names of which were published in Appendix II. of the octavo edition.

The great limestone, above mentioned, prevails not only in the Val di Noto, but reappears in the centre of the island, capping the hill of Castrogiovanni, at the height of three thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is cavernous there, as at Sortino and Syracuse, and contains fossil shells and casts of shells of the same species.*

*Schistose and arenaceous limestone, &c.* (*b.* Fig. 67.).—The limestone above mentioned passes downwards into a white calcareous sand, which has sometimes a tendency to an oolitic and pisolitic structure, analogous to that before described when speaking of the travertin of Tivoli.† At Floridia, near Syracuse, it contains a sufficient number of small calcareous pebbles to constitute a conglomerate, where also beds of sandy limestone are associated, replete with numerous fragments of shells, and much resembling, in structure, the English corn-brash. A diagonal lamination is often observable in the calcareous sandy beds analogous to that represented in the first volume (p. 374. Fig. 10.), and to that exhibited in many sections of the English crag.‡

In some parts of Sicily, this sandy calcareous division, *b*, seems to be represented by yellow sand, exactly resembling that so frequently superimposed on the blue shelly marl of the Subapennines in the Italian peninsula. Thus, near Grammichele, on the road to Caltagirone, beds of incoherent yellow sand, several hundred feet in thickness, with occasional layers of shells, repose upon the blue shelly marl of Caltagirone.

---

* Dr. Daubeny correctly identified the Val di Noto limestone of Syracuse with that of the summit of Castrogiovanni.—Jameson, Ed. Phil. Journ., No. xxv. p. 107. July, 1825.

† Vol. I. p. 318.

‡ See chap. xiii.

When we consider the arenaceous character of this formation, the disposition of the laminæ, and the broken shells sometimes imbedded in it, it is difficult not to suspect that it was formed in shallower water, and nearer the action of superficial currents, than the superincumbent limestone, which was evidently accumulated in a sea of considerable depth. If we adopt this view, we must suppose a subsidence of the bed of the sea, subsequent to the deposition of the arenaceous beds in the Val di Noto.

*Blue marl with shells* (*c*, Figs. 67, 68.).—Under the sandy beds, last mentioned, is found an argillaceous deposit of variable thickness, called *Creta* in Sicily. It resembles the blue marl of the Subapennine hills, and, like it, encloses fossil shells and corals in a beautiful state of preservation. Of these I collected a great abundance from the clay, on the south side of the harbour of Syracuse, and twenty species in the environs of Caltanisetta, all of which, with three exceptions, M. Deshayes was able to identify with recent species. From similar blue marl, alternating with yellow sand, at Caltagirone, at an elevation of about 500 feet above the level of the sea, I obtained forty species of shells, of which all but six were recognized as identical with recent species.* The position of this argillaceous formation is well seen at Castrogiovanni and Girgenti, as represented in the sections, Figs. 67, 68. In both of these places, the limestone of the

---

* Lists of these shells were given in Appendix II. of the first, or octavo edition.

Val di Noto reappears, passing downwards into a calcareous sandstone, below which is a shelly blue clay.

*Strata beneath the blue marl.* — The clay rests, in both localities, on an older series of white and blue marls, probably belonging to the tertiary period, but of which I was unable to determine the age, having procured from it no organic remains save the skeletons of fish, all of extinct species, which I found in the white thinly laminated marls.*

These marls are sometimes gypseous, and belong to a great argillaceous formation which stretches over a considerable part of Sicily, and contains sulphur and salt in great abundance. The strata of this group have been in some places contorted in the most extraordinary manner, their convolutions often resembling those seen in the most disturbed districts of primary clay slate.

But I wish, at present, to direct the reader's exclusive attention to strata decidedly referrible to the Newer Pliocene era, and I have yet to mention the igneous rocks associated with the sedimentary formations already alluded to.

*Volcanic rocks of the Val di Noto.* — The volcanic rocks occasionally associated with the limestones, sands, and marls already described, constitute a very prominent feature throughout the Val di Noto. Great confusion might have been expected to prevail, where lava and ejected sand and scoriæ are intermixed with the marine strata, and, accordingly, we find it often impossible to recognize the exact part of the series to which the beds thus interfered with belong.

---

* I found these fossil fish in great abundance on the road, half a mile north-west of Radusa, on my way to Castrogiovanni, where the marls are fetid; and near Castrogiovanni in gypseous marls, at the mile-stone No. 88., and between that and No. 89.

Sometimes there are proofs of the posterior origin of the lava, and sometimes of the newer date of the stratified rock, for we find dikes of lava intersecting both the marl and limestone, while, in other places, calcareous beds repose upon lava, and are unaltered at the point of contact. Thus the shelly limestone of Capo Santa Croce rests in horizontal strata upon a mass of lava, which had evidently been long exposed to the action of the waves, so that the surface has been worn perfectly smooth. The limestone is unchanged at its junction with the igneous rock, and incloses within it pebbles of the lava.*

The volcanic formations of the Val di Noto usually consist of the most ordinary variety of basalt, with or without olivine. The rock is sometimes compact, often very vesicular. The vesicles are occasionally empty, both in dikes and currents, and are in some localities filled with calcareous spar, arragonite, and zeolites. The structure is, in some places, spheroidal; in others, though rarely, columnar. I found dikes of amygdaloid, wacke, and prismatic basalt, intersecting the limestone at the bottom of the hollow called Gozzo degli Martiri, below Melilli.

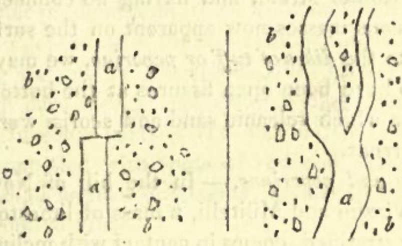
*Dikes.*—Dikes of vesicular and amygdaloidal lava are also seen traversing peperino, west of Palagonia, near a mill by the road side.

In these cases we may suppose the peperino to have resulted from showers of volcanic sand and scoriæ, together with fragments of limestone thrown out by a submarine explosion, similar to that which lately gave rise to the volcanic island off Sciacca. When the mass was, to a certain degree, consolidated, it may have been rent open, so that the lava ascended through fissures, the walls of which were perfectly even and parallel. After the melted matter that filled the rent in No. 69. had cooled down, it must have been fractured and shifted horizontally by a lateral movement.

---

* This locality is described by Professor Hoffmann, Archiv für Mineralogie, &c. Berlin, 1831.

Fig. 69. Fig. 70.



*Horizontal section of dikes near Palagonia.*

*a.* Lava.

*b.* Peperino, consisting of volcanic sand, mixed with fragments of lava and limestone.

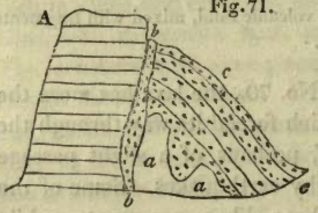
In the second figure, No. 70., the lava has more the appearance of a vein which forced its way through the peperino, availing itself, perhaps, of a slight passage opened by rents caused by earthquakes. Some of the pores of the lava, in these dikes, are empty, while others are filled with carbonate of lime.

The annexed diagrams (Figs. 69. and 70.) represent a ground plan of the rocks as they are exposed to view on a horizontal surface. It is highly probable that similar appearances would be seen, if we could examine the floor of the sea in that part of the Mediterranean where the waves have recently washed away the new volcanic island; for when a superincumbent mass of ejected fragments has been removed by denudation, we may expect to see sections of dikes traversing tuff, or, in other words, sections of the channels of communication by which the subterranean lavas reached the surface.*

On the summit of the limestone platform of the Val di Noto I more than once saw analogous dikes, not only of lava but of volcanic tuff, rising vertically through the horizontal strata, and having no connection with any igneous masses now apparent on the surface. In regard to the *dikes of tuff or peperino*, we may suppose them to have been open fissures at the bottom of the sea, into which volcanic sand and scoriæ were drifted by a current.

*Tuffs and peperinos.* — In the hill of Novera, between Vizzini and Militelli, a mass of limestone, horizontally stratified, comes in contact with inclined strata of tuff (see Fig. 71.); while a mixed calcareous and volcanic breccia, *a a*, supports the inclined layers of tuff, *c*. The vertical fissure, *b b*, is filled with volcanic sand of a different colour. An inspection of this section will convince the reader that the limestone must have been greatly dislocated during the period of the submarine eruptions.

Fig. 71.



A. Limestone.
*aa.* Calcareous breccia with fragments of lava.
*b.* Black tuff.
*c.* Tuff.

At the town of Vizzini a dike of lava intersects the

* See Vol. II. p. 203.

argillaceous strata, and converts them into siliceous schist, which has been contorted and shivered into an immense number of fragments.

I have stated that the beds of limestone, clay, and sand, in the Val di Noto, are often partially intermixed with volcanic ejections, such as may have been showered down into the sea during eruptions, or may have been swept by rivers from the land. When the volcanic matter predominates, these compound rocks constitute the peperinos of the Italian mineralogists, some of which are highly calcareous, full of shells, and extremely hard, being capable of a high polish like marble. In some parts of the Val di Noto they are variously mottled with spots of red and yellow, and contain small angular fragments, similar to the lapilli thrown from volcanos.

It is recorded that, during the eruption of Graham Island off the southern coast of Sicily, the sea was in a state of violent ebullition, and filled for several weeks continuously with red or chocolate-coloured mud, consisting of finely comminuted scoriæ.* During this period, it is clear that the waves and currents that have since had power to sweep away the island, and disperse its materials far and wide over the bed of the sea, must with still greater ease have carried to vast distances the fine red mud, which was seen boiling up from the bottom, so that it may have entered largely into the composition of modern peperinos.

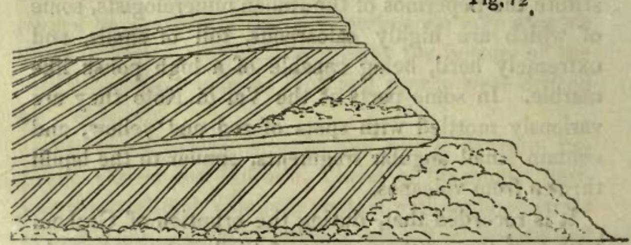
Professor Hoffmann relates that, during the eruption, (June 1831,) the surface of the sea was strewed over, at the distance of thirty miles from the new volcano, with so dense a covering of scoriæ, that the fishermen were obliged to part it with their oars, in order to propel their boats through the water. It is, therefore, quite consistent with analogy, that we should find the ancient tuffs and peperinos so much more generally distributed than the submarine lavas.

---

* Vol. II. p. 200.

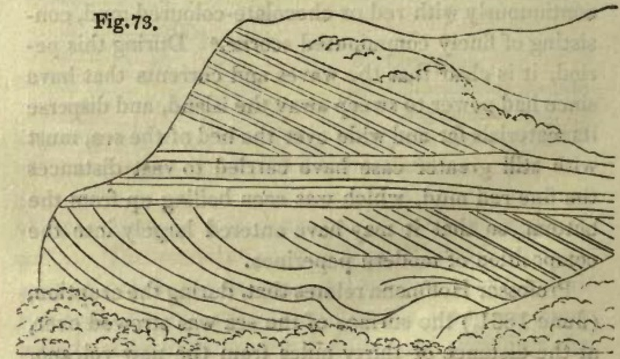
In the road which leads from Palagonia to Lago Naftia, and at the distance of about a mile and a half from the former place, there is a small pass where the hills, on both sides, consist of a calcareous grit, intermixed with some grains of volcanic sand.

Fig. 72.



*Section of calcareous grit and peperino, east of Palagonia. South side of pass Vertical height about thirty feet.*

Fig. 73.



*Section of the same beds on the north side of the pass.*

The disposition of the strata, on both sides of the pass, is most singular, and remarkably well exposed, as the harder layers have resisted the weathering of the atmosphere and project in relief. The sections exhibited on both sides of the pass are nearly vertical, and do not exactly correspond, as will be seen in the annexed diagrams (Figs. 72. and 73.) It is somewhat difficult to conceive in what manner this arrangement of the layers was occasioned; but we may, perhaps, suppose it to have arisen from the throwing down of calcareous sand and volcanic matter, upon steep slanting banks at the bottom of the sea, in which case they might have accumulated at various angles of between thirty and fifty degrees, as may be frequently seen in the sections of volcanic cones in Ischia and elsewhere. The denuding power of the waves may, then, have cut off the upper portion of these banks; so that nearly horizontal layers may have been superimposed unconformably, after which another bank may have been formed in a similar manner to the first.

*Volcanic conglomerates.*—In the Val di Noto we sometimes meet with conglomerates entirely composed of volcanic pebbles. They usually occur in the neighbourhood of masses of lava, and may, perhaps, have been the shingle produced by the wasting cliffs of small islands in a volcanic archipelago. The formation of similar beds of volcanic pebbles may now be seen in progress on the beach north of Catania, where the waves are undermining one of the modern lavas of Etna; and the same may also be seen on the shores of Ischia.

*Proofs of gradual accumulation.*—In one part of the great limestone formation near Lentini, I found some imbedded volcanic pebbles, covered with full-grown serpulæ, supplying a beautiful proof of a considerable interval of time having elapsed between the rounding of these pebbles and their inclosure in a solid stratum. I also observed, not far from Vizzini, a very striking illustration of the length of the intervals which occasionally separated the distinct lava currents. A bed of oysters, perfectly identifiable with our common eatable species, no less than *twenty feet in thickness*, is there seen resting upon a current of basaltic lava; upon the oyster-bed again is superimposed a second mass of lava, together with tuff or peperino. Near Galieri, not far from the same place, a horizontal bed, about a foot and a half in thickness, composed entirely of a common Mediterranean coral (*Caryophyllia cespitosa*, Lam.), is also seen in the midst of the same series of alternating igneous and aqueous formations. These corals stand erect as they grew; and after being traced for hundreds of yards, are again found at a corresponding height on the opposite side of the valley.

*Dip and direction.*—The disturbance which the Newer Pliocene strata have undergone in Sicily, subsequent to their deposition, varies greatly in degree in different places; in general, however, they are nearly horizontal, and are not often highly inclined. The calcareous schists, on which part of the town of Lentini is built, are much fractured, and dip at an angle of twenty-five degrees to the north-west. In some of the valleys in the neighbourhood an anticlinal dip is seen, the beds on one side being inclined to the north-west, and on the other to the south-east.

Throughout a considerable part of Sicily which I examined, the dips of the tertiary strata were north-east and south-west; as, for example, in the district included between Terranuova, Girgenti, Caltanisetta, and Piazza, where there are several parallel lines, or ridges of elevation, which run from north-west to south-east.*

---

* I have reprinted this chapter without additions, and almost without alterations, nearly as I wrote it soon after my tour in Sicily, in 1828. But we may shortly expect a fuller account of the geology of Sicily from Professor Hoffmann of Berlin, who has devoted more than a year to its examination.

## CHAPTER VII.

### NEWER PLIOCENE FORMATIONS — ETNA.

Marine and volcanic formations at the base of Etna — Their connection with the strata of the Val di Noto — Bay of Trezza — Cyclopian isles — Fossil shells of recent species (p. 425.) — Basalt and altered rocks in the Isle of Cyclops — Internal structure of the cone of Etna — Val di Calanna (p. 434.) — Val del Bove not an ancient crater — its precipices intersected by countless dikes — Scenery of the Val del Bove — Form, composition, and origin of the dikes (p. 440.) — Lavas and breccias intersected by them.

THE phenomena considered in the last chapter suggest many theoretical views of the highest interest in geology; but before entering upon these topics I am desirous of describing some analogous formations in Valdemone.

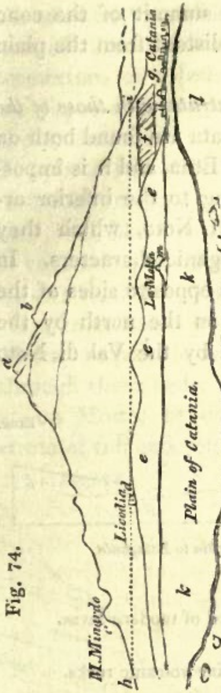
If the traveller passes along the table-land, formed by the great limestone of the Val di Noto, until it terminates suddenly near Primosole, he there sees the plain of Catania at his feet; and before him, to the north, the cone of Etna (see Fig. 74.). At the base of the cone he beholds a low line of hills, *e e*, formed of clays and marls, associated with yellowish sand, similar to the formation provincially termed "Creta," in various parts of Sicily.*

This marine formation, which is composed partly of

---

* See Creta, before described, p. 410.

Fig. 74.



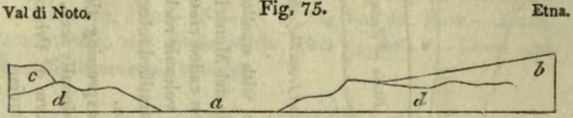
*View of Etna from the summit of the limestone platform of Primosole.*

*a.* Highest cone. *b.* Montagnuola.
*c.* Monte Minardo, with smaller lateral cones above.
*d.* Town of Licodia dei Monaci.
*e.* Marine formation called creta, argillaceous and sandy beds with a few shells, and associated volcanic rocks.
*f.* Escarpment of stratified subaqueous volcanic tuff, &c., north-west of Catania.
*g.* Town of Catania.
*h. i.* Dotted line expressing the highest boundary along which the marine strata are occasionally seen. *k.* Plain of Catania.
*l.* Limestone platform of Primosole of the Newer Pliocene.
*m.* La Motta di Catania.

volcanic and partly of sedimentary rocks, is seen to lie below the modern lavas of Etna. To what extent it forms the base of the mountain cannot be observed, for want of sections of the lower part of the cone; but the marine sub-Etnean beds are not seen to rise to a greater elevation than eight hundred, or, at the utmost, one thousand, feet above the level of the sea. The annexed drawing is not a section, but an outline view of Etna, as seen from Primosole; so that the proportional height of the volcanic cone, which is, in reality, ten times greater than that of the hills of "Creta," at its base, is not expressed, the summit of the cone being ten or twelve miles more distant from the plain of Catania than Licodia.

*Connection of the sub-Etnean strata with those of the Val di Noto.*—These marine strata are found both on the southern and eastern foot of Etna, and it is impossible not to infer that they belong to the inferior argillaceous series of the Val di Noto, which they resemble both in mineral and organic characters. In one locality they appear on the opposite sides of the Valley of the Simeto, covered on the north by the lavas of Etna, and on the south by the Val di Noto limestone.

Fig. 75.



*Section from Paternò by Lago di Naftia to Palagonia.*

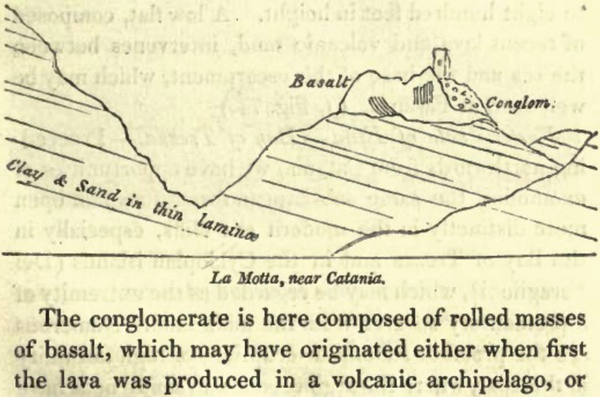
*a.* Plain of the Simeto.
*b.* Base of the cone of Etna, composed of modern lavas.
*c.* Limestone of the Val di Noto.
*d.* Clay, sand, and associated submarine volcanic rocks.

If in the country adjacent to the Lago di Naftia, through which the annexed section is drawn, and in several other districts where the "creta" prevails, together with associated submarine lavas, and where there is no limestone capping, a volcano should now burst forth, and give rise to a great cone, the position of such a cone would exactly correspond to that of the modern Etna, with relation to the rocks on which it rests.

*Southern base of Etna.*—The marine strata of clay and sand already alluded to, alternate in thin layers at the southern base of Etna, sometimes attaining a thickness of three hundred feet, or more, without any intermixture of volcanic matter. Crystals of selenite are dispersed through the clay, accompanied by a few shells, almost entirely of recent Mediterranean species. This formation of blue marl and yellow sand greatly resembles in character that of the Italian Subapennine beds, and, like them, often presents a surface denuded of vegetation, in consequence of the action of the rains on soft incoherent materials.

In travelling by Paternò, Misterbianco, and La Motta, we pass through deep narrow valleys excavated through these beds, which are sometimes capped, as at La Motta, by columnar basalt, accompanied by strata of tuff and volcanic conglomerate. (Fig. 76.)

Fig. 76.



*La Motta, near Catania.*

The conglomerate is here composed of rolled masses of basalt, which may have originated either when first the lava was produced in a volcanic archipelago, or subsequently when the whole country was rising from beneath the level of the sea. Its occurrence in this situation is striking, as not a single pebble can be observed in the entire thickness of subjacent beds of sand and clay.

The dip of the marine strata, at the base of Etna, is by no means uniform; on the eastern side, for example, they are sometimes inclined towards the sea, and at others towards the mountain. Near the aqueduct at Adernò, on the southern side, I observed two sections, in quarries not far distant from each other, where beds of clay and yellow sand dipped, in one locality, at an angle of forty-five degrees to the east-south-east, and in the other at a much higher inclination in the opposite direction. These facts would be of small interest, if these mixed marine and volcanic deposits, which encircle part of the base of Etna, had not been considered by a geologist of high authority as the outer margin of an erhebungs crater.*

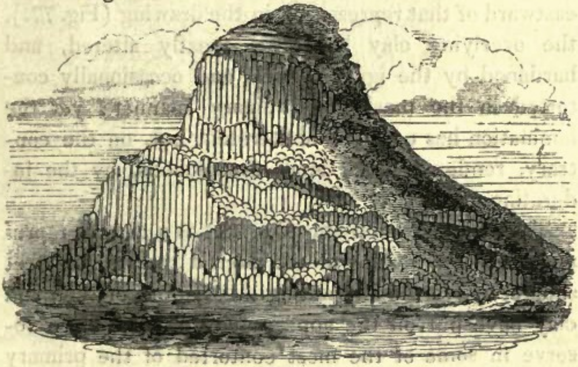
Near Catania the marine formation, consisting chiefly of volcanic tuff thinly laminated, terminates in a steep inland cliff, or escarpment, which is from six hundred to eight hundred feet in height. A low flat, composed of recent lava and volcanic sand, intervenes between the sea and the base of this escarpment, which may be well seen at Fasano. (*f*, Fig. 74.)

*Eastern side of Etna—Bay of Trezza.*—Proceeding northwards from Catania, we have opportunities of examining the same sub-Etnean formations laid open more distinctly in the modern sea cliffs, especially in the Bay of Trezza and in the Cyclopian islands (Dei Faraglioni), which may be regarded as the extremity of a promontory severed from the main land. Numerous are the proofs of submarine eruptions of high antiquity in this spot, where the argillaceous and sandy beds have been invaded and intersected by lava, and where those peculiar tufaceous breccias occur which result from ejections of fragmentary matter, projected from a volcanic vent. I observed many angular and hardened fragments of laminated clay (creta), in different states of alteration, between La Trezza and Nizzitta, and in the hills above Aci Castello, a town on the main land contiguous to the Cyclopian isles, which could not be mistaken by one familiar with Somma and the minor cones of Ischia, for any thing but masses thrown out by volcanic explosions. From the tuffs and marls of this district I collected a great variety of marine shells, almost all of which have been identified with species now inhabiting the Mediterranean, and, for the most part, now frequent on the coast immediately adjacent.*

---

* See Vol. II. p. 216.

Fig. 77.



*View of the Isle of Cyclops in the Bay of Trezza.* †

---

* A list of sixty-five species of shells, named by M. Deshayes, which I procured from the hills called Monte Cavalaccio, Rocca di Ferro, and Rocca di Bempolere (or Borgia), was published in App. II. of 1st edit. The occurrence of shells in these and some neighbouring localities was not unknown to the naturalists of Catania; but, having been recognized by them as *recent* species, they were supposed to have been carried up from the sea-shore to fertilize the soil, and therefore disregarded. Their position is well known to many of the peasants of the country, by whom the fossils are called "roba di diluvio."

† This view of the Isle of Cyclops is from an original drawing

Some few of these fossil shells retain part of their colour, which is the same as in their living analogues.

The loftiest of the Cyclopian islets, or rather rocks, is about two hundred feet in height, the summit being formed of a mass of stratified clay (creta), the laminæ of which are occasionally subdivided by thin arenaceous layers. These strata dip to the N.W., and rest on a mass of columnar lava (see Fig. 77.), in which the tops of the pillars are weathered, and so rounded as to be often hemispherical. In some places in the adjoining and largest islet of the group, which lies to the north-eastward of that represented in the drawing (Fig. 77.), the overlying clay has been greatly altered, and hardened by the igneous rock, and occasionally contorted in the most extraordinary manner; yet the lamination has not been obliterated, but, on the contrary, rendered much more conspicuous, by the indurating process.

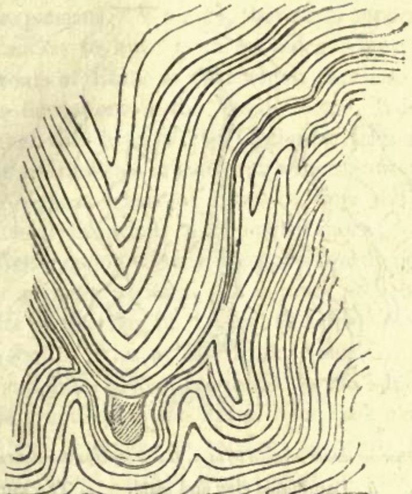
The annexed wood-cut (Fig. 78.) is a careful representation of a portion of the altered rock, a few feet square, where the alternating thin laminæ of sand and clay have put on the appearance which we often observe in some of the most contorted of the primary schists.

A great fissure, running from east to west, nearly divides this larger island into two parts, and lays open its internal structure. In the section thus exhibited, a dike of lava is seen, first cutting through an older mass of lava, and then penetrating the superincumbent tertiary strata. In one place, the lava ramifies and

---

by my friend Captain Basil Hall, R. N., and is a correction of one given in a former edition.

Fig. 78.



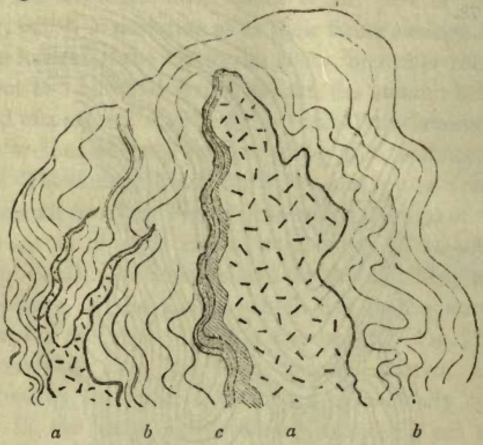
*Contortions in the Newer Pliocene strata in the largest of the Cyclopian Islands.*

terminates in thin veins, from a few feet to a few inches in thickness (see Fig. 79.).

The arenaceous laminæ are much hardened at the point of contact, and the clays are converted into siliceous schist. In this island the altered rocks assume a honeycombed structure on their weathered surface, singularly contrasted with the smooth and even outline which the same beds present in their usual soft and yielding state.

The pores of the lava are sometimes coated, or en-

Fig. 79.



*Newer Pliocene strata invaded by lava, Isle of Cyclops (horizontal section).*

*a.* Lava. *b.* Laminated clay and sand. *c.* The same altered.

tirely filled, with carbonate of lime, and with a zeolite resembling analcime, which has been called cyclopite. The latter mineral has also been found in small fissures traversing the altered marl, showing that the same cause which introduced the minerals into the cavities of the lava, whether we suppose sublimation or aqueous infiltration, conveyed it also into the open rents of the contiguous sedimentary strata.

*Lavas of the Cyclopian Isles not currents from Etna.* — The phenomena of the Bay of Trezza are very important; for it is evident that the submarine lavas were produced by eruptions on the spot, an inference which follows not only from the presence of dikes and veins, but from those tuffs above Castello d'Aci, which contain angular fragments of hardened marl, evidently thrown up, together with the sand and scoriæ, by volcanic explosions. We may, therefore, suppose this volcanic action to have been as independent of the modern vents of Etna, as that which gave rise to the analogous formations in the Val di Noto. It is quite evident that the lavas of the Cyclopian Isles are not the lower extremities of currents which flowed down from the highest crater of Etna, or from the region where lateral eruptions are now frequent, — lavas which, after entering the sea, were afterwards upraised into their present position. It is more probable that the basalts of the Bay of Trezza, and those along the southern foot of Etna, at La Motta, Adernò, Paternò, Licodia, and other places, originated in the same sea in which the eruptions of the Val di Noto took place.

There are, however, no sections to prove that the central and oldest parts of Etna repose on similar submarine formations. The modern lavas of the volcano are continually extending their area, and covering, from time to time, a larger portion of the marine strata; but we know not where this operation commenced, so that we cannot demonstrate the posteriority of the whole cone to these Newer Pliocene strata.

We might imagine that when the volcanos of the Val di Noti were in activity, and when the eruptions of the Bay of Trezza were taking place, Etna already existed as a volcano, the upper part only of the cone projecting above the level of the waters, as in the case of Stromboli at present. By such an hypothesis, we might refer the origin of the older part of Etna to the same period as that of the sedimentary strata and volcanic rocks of the Val di Noto.

But there are no obvious grounds for inclining to such a theory; for we must admit that a sufficient series of ages has elapsed since the limestone of the Val di Noto was deposited, to allow it to be elevated to the height of from two thousand to three thousand feet, in which case there may also have been sufficient time for the growth of a volcanic pile like Etna, since the period when the Newer Pliocene strata now seen at the base of the volcano originated.

### *Internal Structure of the Cone of Etna.*

In the second book I merely described that part of Etna which is known to have been formed during the historical era*; an insignificant portion of the whole mass. Nearly all the remainder may be referred to the tertiary period immediately antecedent to the *recent* epoch. The great cone is, in general, of a very symmetrical form, but is broken, on its eastern side, by a deep valley, called the Val del Bove, or in the provincial dialect of the peasants, "Val di Bué," for here the herdsman

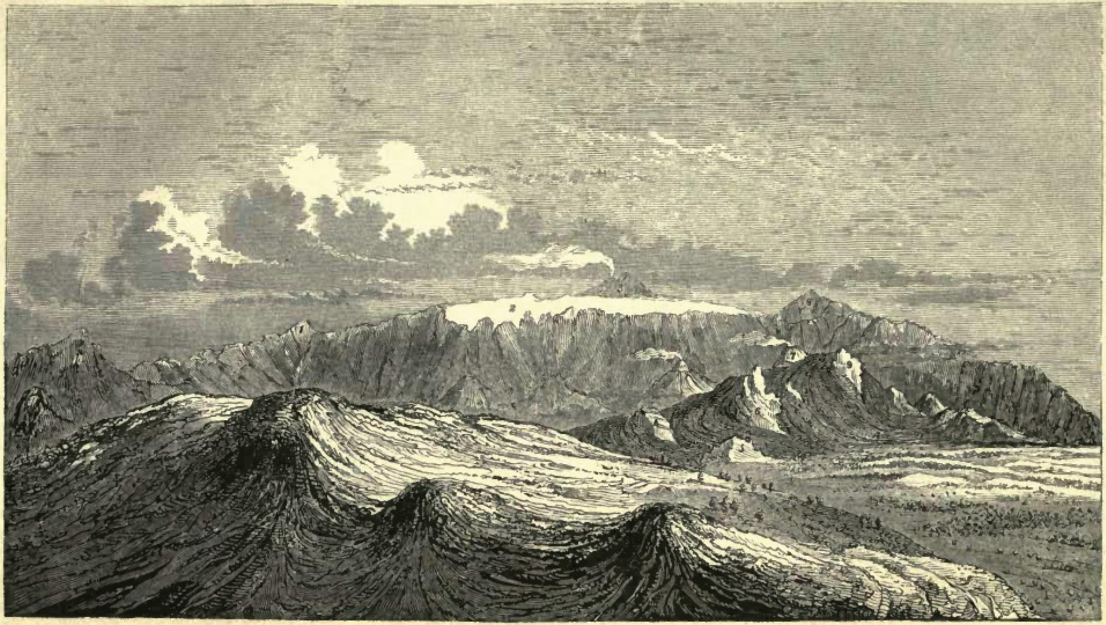
——— "in reductâ valle *mugientium*
Prospectat errantes greges."

Dr. Buckland was, I believe, the first English geologist who examined this valley with attention, and I am indebted to him for having described it to me, before I visited Sicily, as more worthy of attention than any single spot in that island, or perhaps in Europe.

*Description of Plate* VIII.—The accompanying view (Pl. VIII.) is part of a panoramic sketch which I made in November, 1828, and may assist the reader in comprehending some topographical details, to be alluded

---

* Vol. II. p. 164.



VIEW LOOKING UP THE VAL DEL BOVE, ETNA.

to in the sequel, although it can convey no idea of the picturesque grandeur of the scene.

The great lava-currents of 1819 and 1811 are seen pouring down from the higher parts of the valley, over-running the forests of the great plain, and rising up in the foreground on the left with a rugged surface, on which many hillocks and depressions appear, such as often characterize a lava-current immediately after its consolidation.

The small cone, No. 7., was formed in 1811, and was still smoking when I saw it in 1828. The other small volcano to the left, from which vapour is issuing, was I believe one of those formed in 1819.

The following are the names of some of the other points indicated in the sketch :—

1. **Montagnuola.** 2. **Torre del Filosofo.** 3. **Highest cone.** 4. **Lepra.** 5. **Finocchio.** 6. **Capra.** 7. **Cone of 1811.** 8. **Cima del Asino.** 9. **Musara.** 10. **Zocolaro.** 11. **Rocca di Calanna.**

*Description of Plate* IX.—The second view (Pl. IX.) represents the same valley as seen from above, or looking directly down the Val del Bove, from the summit of the principal crater formed in 1819. I am unable to point out the precise spot which this crater would occupy in the view represented in Plate VIII.; but I conceive that it would appear in the face of the great precipice, near which the smoke issuing from the cone No. 7. is made to terminate. There are many ledges of rock on the face of that precipice where eruptions have occurred.

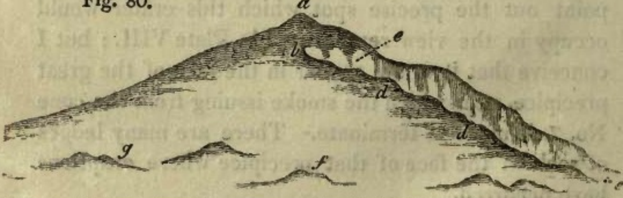
The circular form of the Val del Bove is well shown in this view (Pl. IX.). To the right and left are the lofty precipices which form the southern and northern sides of the great valley, and are intersected by dike projecting in the manner afterwards to be described. In the distance appears the "fertile region" of Etna, extending like a great plain along the sea coast.

The spots particularly referred to in the plate are the following:—

*a.* Cape Spartivento, in Italy, of which the outline is seen in the distance.
*b.* The promontory of Taormino, on the Sicilian coast.
*c.* The river Alcantra.
*d.* The small village of Riposto.
*f.* Town of Aci Reale.
*g.* Cyclopian Islands, or "Faraglioni," in the bay of Trezza.
*h.* The great harbour of Syracuse.
*k.* City of Catania, near which is marked the course of the lava which flowed from the Monti Rossi in 1669, and destroyed part of the city.
*i.* The lake of Lentini.
*l.* To the left of the view is the crater of 1811, which is also shown at No. 7., in Plate VIII.
*m.* Rock of Musara, also seen at No. 9., in Plate VIII.
*e.* Valley of Calanna.

The Val del Bove, represented in the above drawings, commences near the summit of Etna, and descending into the woody region is farther continued on one

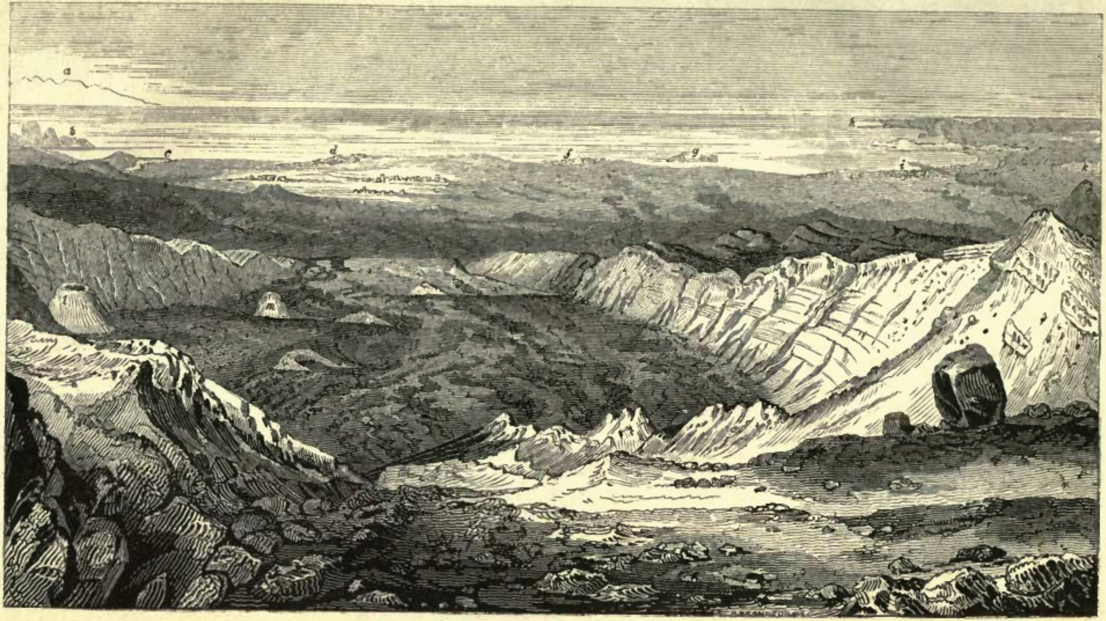
Fig. 80.



*Great Valley on the east side of Etna.*

*a.* Highest cone.
*b.* Montagnuola.
*c.* Head of Val del Bove.
*d, d.* Serre del Solfizio.
*e.* Village of Zaffarana on the lower border of the woody region.
*f.* One of the lateral cones.
*g.* Monti Rossi.

PLATE IX.



VIEW OF VAL DEL BOVE, ETNA, AS SEEN FROM ABOVE, OR FROM CRATER OF 1819.

side by a second and narrower valley, called the Val di Calanna. Below this another, named the Val di St. Giacomo, begins,—a long narrow ravine, which is prolonged to the neighbourhood of Zaffarana (*e.* Fig. 80.) on the confines of the fertile region. These natural incisions, into the side of the volcano, are of such depth that they expose to view a great part of the structure of the entire mass, which, in the Val del Bove, is laid open to the depth of from four thousand to five thousand feet from the summit of Etna. The geologist thus enjoys an opportunity of ascertaining how far the internal conformation of the cone corresponds with what he might have anticipated as the result of that mode of increase which has been witnessed during the historical era.

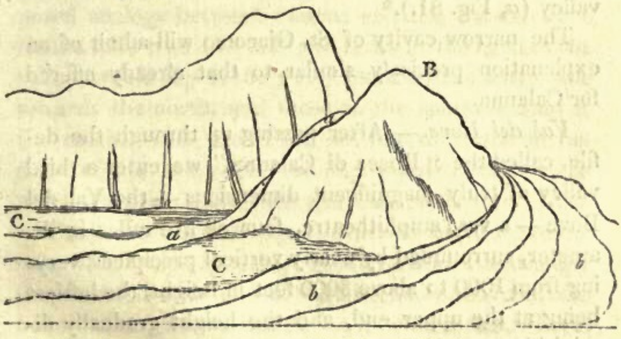
It is clear, from what was before said of the gradual manner in which the principal cone increases, partly by streams of lava and showers of volcanic ashes ejected from the summit, partly by the throwing up of minor hills and the issuing of lava-currents on the flanks of the mountain, that the whole cone must consist of a series of cones enveloping others, the regularity of each being only interrupted by the interference of the lateral volcanos.

We might, therefore, have anticipated that a section of Etna, as exposed in a ravine which should begin near the summit and extend nearly to the sea, would correspond very closely to the section of the ancient Vesuvius, commencing with the escarpment of Somma, and ending with the Fossa Grande; but with this difference, that where the ravine intersects the woody region of Etna, indications must appear of changes brought about by lateral eruptions. Now the section, which can be traced from the head of the Val del Bove to the inferior borders of the woody region, fully answers such expectations. We find, almost every where, a series of layers of tuff and breccia interstratified with lavas, which slope gently to the sea, at an angle of from twenty to thirty degrees; and as we rise to the parallel of the zone of lateral eruptions, and still more as we approach the summit, we discover indications of disturbances, occasioned by the passage of lava from below, and the successive inhumation of lateral cones.

*Val di Calanna.*—On leaving Zaffarana, on the borders of the fertile region, we enter the ravine-like valley of St. Giacomo, and see on the north side, or on our right as we ascend, rising ground composed of the modern lavas of Etna. On our left, a lofty cliff, wherein a regular series of beds is exhibited, composed of tuffs and lavas, descending with a gentle inclination towards the sea. In this lower part of the section there are no intersecting dikes, nor any signs of minor cones interfering with the regular slope of the alternating volcanic products. If we then pass upwards through a defile, called the "Portello di Calanna," we enter a second valley, that of Calanna, resembling the ravine before mentioned, but wider and much deeper. Here again we find, on our right, many currents of modern lava, piled one upon the other; and on our left a continuation of our former section, in a perpendicular cliff from four hundred to five hundred feet high. As this lofty wall sweeps in a curve, it has very much the appearance of the escarpment which Somma presents towards Vesuvius, and this resemblance is increased by the occurrence of two or three vertical dikes which traverse the gently-inclined volcanic beds. When I first beheld this precipice, I fancied that I had entered a lateral crater, but was soon undeceived, by discovering that on all sides, both at the head of the valley, in the hill of Zocolaro, and at its side and lower extremity, the dip of the beds was always in the same direction, all slanting to the east, or towards the sea, instead of sloping to the north, east, and south, as would have been the case had they constituted three walls of an ancient crater.

It is not difficult to explain how the valleys of St. Giacomo and Calanna originated, when once the line of lofty precipices on the north side of them had been formed. Many lava currents flowing down successively from the higher regions of Etna, along the foot of a great escarpment of volcanic rock, have at length been turned by a promontory at the head of the valley of Calanna, which runs out at right angles to the great line of precipices. This promontory consists of the hills called Zocolaro and Calanna, and of a ridge of inferior height which connects them. (See Fig. 81.)

Fig. 81.



A. Zocolaro. B. Monte di Calamna.

C. Plain at the head of the Valley of Calanna.

*a*. Lava of 1819 descending the precipice and flowing through the valley.

*b*. Lavas of 1811 and 1819 flowing round the hill of Calanna.

The flows of melted matter have been deflected from their course by this projecting mass, just as a tidal current, after setting against a line of sea cliffs, is often thrown off into a new direction by some rocky headland.

Lava streams, it is well known, become solid externally, even while yet in motion; and their sides may be compared to two rocky walls, which are sometimes inclined at an angle of forty-five degrees. When such streams descend a considerable slope at the base of a line of precipices, and are turned from their course by a projecting rock, they move right onwards in a new direction, so as to leave a considerable space (as in the valley of Calanna) between them and the cliffs which may be continuous below the point of deflection.

It happened in 1811 and 1819, that the flows of lava overtopped the ridge intervening between the hills of Zocolaro and Calanna, so that they fell in a cascade over a lofty precipice, and began to fill up the valley (*a*, Fig. 81.).*

The narrow cavity of St. Giacomo will admit of an explanation precisely similar to that already offered for Calanna.

*Val del Bove.* — After passing up through the defile, called the "Rocca di Calanna," we enter a third valley of truly magnificent dimensions — the Val del Bove — a vast amphitheatre, four or five miles in diameter, surrounded by nearly vertical precipices, varying from 1000 to above 3000 feet in height, the loftiest being at the upper end, and the height gradually diminishing on both sides. The feature which first strikes the geologist as distinguishing this valley from those before mentioned, is the prodigious multitudes of vertical dikes, which are seen in all directions traversing the volcanic beds. The circular form of this great chasm, and the occurrence of these countless dikes, amounting perhaps to several thousands in number, so forcibly recalled to my mind the phenomena of the Atrio del Cavallo, on Vesuvius, that I imagined once more that I had entered a vast crater, on a scale as far exceeding that of Somma as Etna surpasses Vesuvius in magnitude.

---

* This is the cascade mentioned in Vol. II. p. 75.

But having already been deceived in regard to the crescent-shaped precipice of the valley of Calanna, I began attentively to explore the different sides of the great amphitheatre, in order to satisfy myself whether the semicircular wall of the Val del Bove had ever formed the boundary of a crater, and whether the beds had the same quâquâ-versal dip which is so beautifully exhibited in the escarpment of Somma. If the supposed analogy between Somma and the Val del Bove should hold true, the tuffs and lavas, at the head of the valley, would dip to the west, those on the north side towards the north, and those on the southern side to the south. But such I did not find to be the inclination of the beds; they all dip towards the sea, or nearly east, as in the Valley of Calanna.

There are undoubtedly exceptions to this general rule, which might deceive a geologist who was strongly prepossessed with a belief that he had discovered the hollow of an ancient crater. It is evident that, wherever lateral cones are intersected in the precipices, a series of tuffs and lavas, very similar to those which enter into the structure of the great cone, will be seen dipping at a much more rapid angle.

The lavas and tuffs, which have conformed to the sides of Etna, dip at angles of from fifteen to twenty-five degrees, while the slope of the lateral cones is from thirty-five to fifty degrees. Now, wherever we meet with sections of these buried cones in the precipices bordering the Val del Bove (and they are frequent in the cliffs called the Serre del Solfizio, and in those near the head of the valley not far from the rock of Musara), we find the beds dipping at high angles and inclined in various directions.

*Scenery of the Val del Bove.* — Without entering at present into any further discussions respecting the origin of the Val del Bove, I shall proceed to describe some of its most remarkable features. Let the reader picture to himself a large amphitheatre, five miles in diameter, and surrounded on three sides by precipices from 2000 to 3000 feet in height. If he has beheld that most picturesque scene in the chain of the Pyrenees, the celebrated "cirque of Gavarnie," he may form some conception of the magnificent circle of precipitous rocks which inclose, on three sides, the great plain of the Val del Bove. This plain has been deluged by repeated streams of lava; and although it appears almost level when viewed from a distance, it is, in fact, more uneven than the surface of the most tempestuous sea. Besides the minor irregularities of the lava, the valley is in one part interrupted by a ridge of rocks, two of which, Musara and Capra, are very prominent. It can hardly be said that they

> ——— "like giants stand
> To sentinel enchanted land;"

for although, like the Trosachs in the Highlands of Scotland, they are of gigantic dimensions, and appear almost isolated as seen from many points, yet the stern and severe grandeur of the scenery which they adorn is not such as would be selected by a poet for a vale of enchantment. The character of the scene would accord far better with Milton's picture of the infernal world; and if we imagine ourselves to behold in motion, in the darkness of the night, one of those fiery currents which have so often traversed the great valley, we may well recall

> ——— "yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
> The seat of desolation, void of light,
> Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
> Casts pale and dreadful."

The face of the precipices already mentioned is broken in the most picturesque manner by the vertical walls of lava which traverse them. These masses usually stand out in relief, are exceedingly diversified in form, and of immense altitude. In the autumn, their black outline may often be seen relieved by clouds of fleecy vapour which settle behind them, and do not disperse until mid-day, continuing to fill the valley while the sun is shining on every other part of Sicily, and on the higher regions of Etna.

As soon as the vapours begin to rise, the changes of scene are varied in the highest degree, different rocks being unveiled and hidden by turns, and the summit of Etna often breaking through the clouds for a moment with its dazzling snows, and being then as suddenly withdrawn from the view.

An unusual silence prevails; for there are no torrents dashing from the rocks, nor any movement of running water in this valley, such as may almost invariably be heard in mountainous regions. Every drop of water that falls from the heavens, or flows from the melting ice and snow, is instantly absorbed by the porous lava;

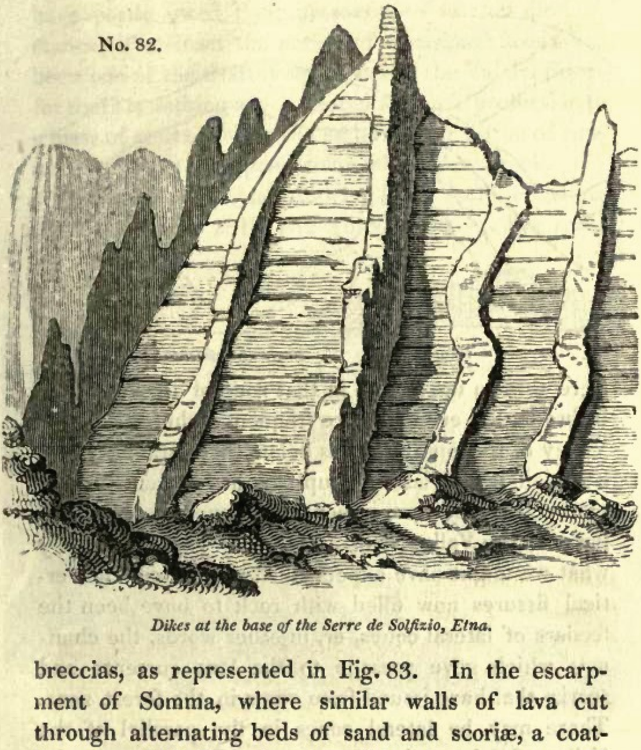
and such is the dearth of springs, that the herdsman is compelled to supply his flocks, during the hot season, from stores of snow laid up in hollows of the mountain during winter.

The strips of green herbage and forest land, which have here and there escaped the buring lavas, serve, by contrast, to heighten the desolation of the scene. When I visited the valley, nine years after the eruption of 1819, I saw hundreds of trees, or rather the white skeletons of trees, on the borders of the black lava, the trunks and branches being all leafless, and deprived of their bark by the scorching heat emitted from the melted rock; an image recalling those beautiful lines: —

> ——— "As when heaven's fire
> Hath scath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
> With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
> Stands on the blasted heath."

*Form, composition, and origin of the dikes.* — But without indulging the imagination any longer in descriptions of scenery, I may observe, that the dikes before mentioned form unquestionably the most interesting geological phenomenon in the Val del Bove. Some of these are composed of trachyte, others of compact blue basalt with olivine. They vary in breadth from two to twenty feet and upwards, and usually project from the face of the cliffs, as represented in the annexed drawing (Fig. 82.). They consist of harder materials than the strata which they traverse, and therefore waste away less rapidly under the influence of that repeated congelation and thawing to which the rocks in this zone of Etna are exposed. The dikes are, for the most part, vertical, but sometimes they run in a tortuous course through the tuffs and

No. 82.

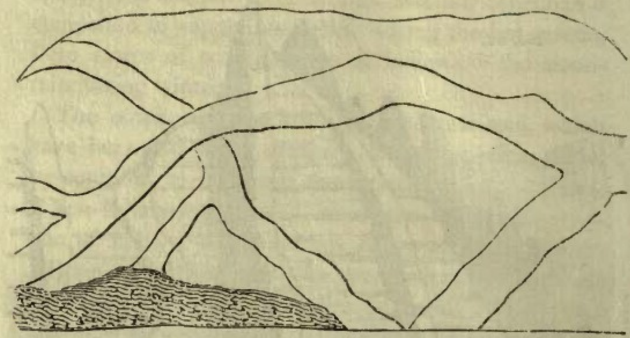


*Dikes at the base of the Serre de Solfizio, Etna.*

breccias, as represented in Fig. 83. In the escarpment of Somma, where similar walls of lava cut through alternating beds of sand and scoriæ, a coating of coal-black rock, approaching in its nature and appearance to pitch-stone, is seen at the contact of the dike with the intersected beds. I did not observe such parting layers at the junction of the Etnean dikes which I examined, but they may perhaps be discoverable.

The geographical position of these dikes is most interesting, as they are very numerous near the head of the Val del Bove, where the cones of 1811 and 1819

Fig. 83.



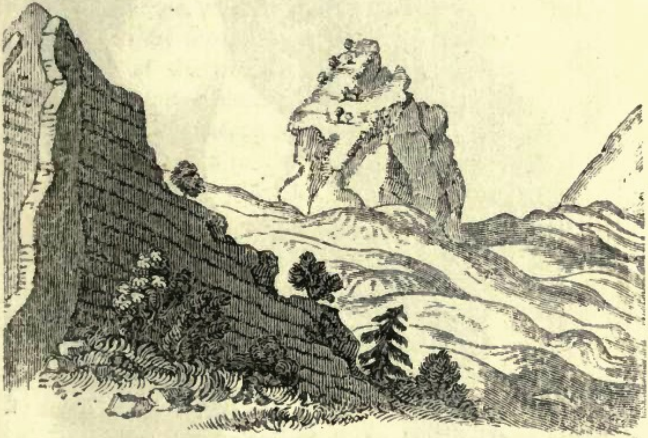
*Veins of Lava.* *Punto di Guimento.*

were thrown up, as also in that zone of the mountain where lateral eruptions are frequent; whereas, in the Valley of Calanna, which is below that parallel, and in a region where lateral eruptions are extremely rare, scarcely any dikes are seen, and none whatever still lower in the Valley of St. Giacomo. This is precisely what we might have expected, if we consider the vertical fissures now filled with rock to have been the feeders of lateral cones, or, in other words, the channels which gave passage to the lava currents and scoriæ that have issued from vents in the forest zone. There may be lateral cones in the parallel of the Valley of Calanna in other parts of Etna, because the line of lateral eruptions is not everywhere at the same height above the sea; but in the section above alluded to there appeared to me an obvious connexion between the frequency of dikes and of lateral eruptions.

Some fissures may have been filled from above, but I did not see any which, by terminating downwards, gave proof of such an origin. Almost all the isolated masses in the Val del Bove, such as Capra, Musara, and others, are traversed by dikes, and may, perhaps, have partly owed their preservation to that circumstance, if at least the action of occasional floods has been one of the destroying causes in the Val del Bove; for there is nothing which affords so much protection to a mass of strata against the undermining action of running water, as a perpendicular dike of hard rock.

In the accompanying drawing (Fig. 84.) the flowing of the lavas of 1811 and 1819, between the rocks Finochio, Capra, and Musara, is represented. The height of the two last-mentioned isolated masses has been much diminished by the elevation of their base, caused by these currents. They may, perhaps, be the remnants of cones which existed before the Val del Bove was formed, and may hereafter be once more buried by the lavas that are now accumulating in the valley.

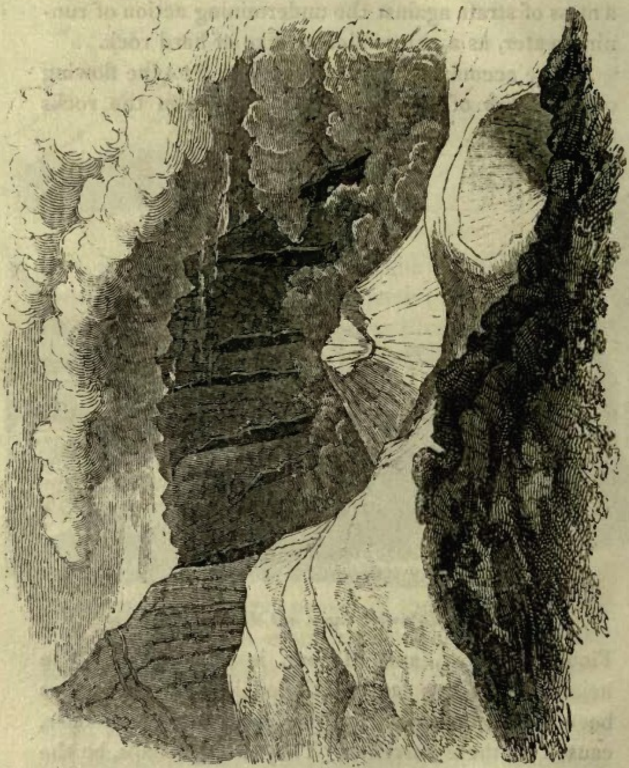
Fig. 84.



*View of the rocks Finochio, Capra, and Musara, Val del Bove.*

From no point of view are the dikes more conspicuous than from the summit of the highest cone of Etna; a view of some of them are given in the annexed drawing (Fig. 85.).

Fig. 85.



View from the summit of Etna into the Val del Bove.

*The small cone and crater immediately below were among those formed during the eruptions of* 1810 *and* 1811. *

---

* This drawing is part of a panoramic sketch which I made from the summit of the cone, December 1. 1828, when every part of Etna was free from clouds except the Val del Bove.

*Lavas and breccias.* — In regard to the volcanic masses which are intersected by dikes in the Val del Bove, they consist, in great part, of greystone lavas, of an intermediate character between basalt and trachyte, and partly of the trachytic varieties of lava. Beds of scoriæ and sand, also, are very numerous, alternating with breccias formed of angular blocks of igneous rock. It is possible that some of the breccias may be referred to aqueous causes, as we have before seen that great floods do occasionally sweep down the flanks of Etna when eruptions take place in winter, and when the snows are melted by lava.

Many of the angular fragments may have been thrown out by volcanic explosions, which, falling on the hardened surface of moving lava currents, may have been carried to a considerable distance. It may also happen, that when lava advances very slowly, in the manner of the flow of 1819, described in the second volume *, the angular masses resulting from the frequent breaking of the mass, as it rolls over upon itself, may produce these breccias. It is at least certain, that the upper portion of the lava currents of 1811 and 1819 now consist of angular masses to the depth of many yards.

D'Aubuisson has compared the surface of one of the ancient lavas of Auvergne to that of a river suddenly frozen over by the stoppage of immense fragments of drift-ice, a description perfectly applicable to these modern Etnean flows.

---

* P. 175.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NEWER PLIOCENE FORMATIONS — ETNA, *continued.*

Speculations on the origin of the Val del Bove on Etna — Subsidences — Antiquity of the cone of Etna — Mode of computing the age of volcanos — Their growth analogous to that of exogenous trees (p. 450.) — Period required for the production of the lateral cones of Etna — Whether signs of Diluvial Waves are observable on Etna.

### *Origin of the Val del Bove.*

BEFORE concluding my observations on the cone of Etna, the structure of which has been considered in the last chapter, I desire to call the reader's attention to several questions:—first, in regard to the probable origin of the great valley already described; secondly, whether any estimate can be made of the length of the period required for the accumulation of the great cone; and, thirdly, whether there are any signs on the surface of the older part of the mountain, of those devastating waves which, according to the theories of some geologists, have swept again and again over our continents.

I explained in the last chapter my reasons for not assenting to the opinion, that the great cavity on the eastern side of Etna was the hollow of a vast crater, from which the volcanic masses of the surrounding walls were produced. On the other hand, it seems impossible to ascribe the valley to the action of running water alone; for if it had been excavated exclusively by that power, its depth would have increased in the descent; whereas, on the contrary, the precipices are most lofty at the upper extremity, and diminish gradually on approaching the lower region of the volcano.

The structure of the surrounding walls is such as we should expect to see exhibited on any other side of Etna, if a cavity of equal depth should be caused, whether by subsidence, or by the blowing up of part of the flanks of the volcano, or by either of these causes co-operating with the removing action of running water.

Dr. Daubeny informs me, that during the eruption of Vesuvius in 1834, the mountain, and all the adjacent country was violently shaken on the night of August 24. At the same time, two small conical hillocks of volcanic matter which existed in the great crater disappeared. They do not seem to have been ejected, or blown into the air, but to have been actually swallowed up in some internal cavity.

It is recorded, as was stated in the history of earthquakes, that in the year 1772 a great subsidence took place on Papandayang, the largest volcano in the island of Java, an extent of ground, *fifteen miles in length and six in breadth*, covered by no less than forty villages, was engulphed, and the cone lost 4000 feet of its height.*

Now we might imagine a similar event, or a series of subsidences to have formerly occurred on the eastern side of Etna, although such catastrophes have not been witnessed in modern times, or only on a very trifling scale. A narrow ravine, about a mile long, twenty feet wide, and from twenty to thirty-six in depth, has been formed, within the historical era, on the flanks of the volcano, near the town of Mascalucia; and a small circular tract, called the Cisterna, near the summit, sank down in the year 1792 to the depth of about forty feet, and left on all sides of the chasm a vertical section of the beds, exactly resembling those which are seen in the precipices of the Val del Bove. At some remote periods, therefore, we might suppose more extensive portions of the mountain to have fallen in during great earthquakes.

---

* Vol. II. p. 293.

But some geologists will, perhaps, incline to the opinion, that the removed mass was blown up by paroxysmal explosions, such as that which in the year 79 destroyed the ancient cone of Vesuvius, and gave rise to the escarpment of Somma. The Val del Bove, it will be remembered, lies within the zone of lateral eruptions; so that a repetition of volcanic explosions might have taken place, after which the action of running water may have contributed powerfully to degrade the rocks, and to transport the materials to the sea. I have before alluded to the effects of a violent flood, which swept through the Val del Bove in the year 1755, when a fiery torrent of lava had suddenly overflowed a great depth of snow in winter.*

In the present imperfect state of our knowledge of the history of volcanos, we have some difficulty in deciding on the relative probability of these hypotheses; but if we embrace the theory of explosions from below, the cavity would still by no means accord with the theory of the so-called "elevation craters."

---

* Vol. II. p.176.

## *Antiquity of the Cone of Etna.*

It was before remarked, that confined notions in regard to the quantity of past time have tended, more than any other prepossessions, to retard the progress of sound theoretical views in Geology *; the inadequacy of our conceptions of the earth's antiquity having cramped the freedom of our speculations in this science, very much in the same way as a belief in the existence of a vaulted firmament once retarded the progress of astronomy. It was not until Descartes assumed the indefinite extent of the celestial spaces, and removed the supposed boundaries of the universe, that just opinions began to be entertained of the relative distances of the heavenly bodies; and until we habituate ourselves to contemplate the possibility of an indefinite lapse of ages having been comprised within each of the more modern periods of the earth's history, we shall be in danger of forming most erroneous and partial views in Geology.

*Mode of computing the age of volcanos.*—If history had bequeathed to us a faithful record of the eruptions of Etna, and a hundred other of the principal active volcanos of the globe, during the last three thousand years,—if we had an exact account of the volume of lava and matter ejected during that period, and the times of their production,—we might, perhaps, be able to form a correct estimate of the average rate of the growth of a volcanic cone. For we might obtain a mean result from the comparison of the eruptions of so great a number of vents, however irregular might be the development of the igneous action in any one of them, if contemplated singly during a brief period.

---

* Vol. I. p. 111.

It would be necessary to balance protracted periods of inaction against the occasional outburst of paroxysmal explosions. Sometimes we should have evidence of a repose of seventeen centuries, like that which was interposed in Ischia, between the end of the fourth century, B. C., and the beginning of the fourteenth century of our era.* Occasionally a tremendous eruption, like that of Jorullo, would be recorded, giving rise, at once, to a considerable mountain.

If we desire to approximate to the age of a cone such as Etna, we ought first to obtain some data in regard to the thickness of matter which has been added during the historical era, and then endeavour to estimate the time required for the accumulation of such alternating lavas and beds of sand and scoriæ as are superimposed upon each other in the Val del Bove; afterwards we should try to deduce, from observations on other volcanos, the more or less rapid increase of burning mountains in all the different stages of their growth.

*Mode of increase of volcanos analogous to that of exogenous trees.* — There is a considerable analogy between the mode of increase of a volcanic cone and that of trees of *exogenous* growth. These trees augment, both in height and diameter, by the successive application externally of cone upon cone of new ligneous matter; so that if we make a transverse section near the base of the trunk, we intersect a much greater number of layers than nearer to the summit. When branches occasionally shoot out from the trunk they first pierce the bark; and then, after growing to a certain size, if they chance to be broken off, they may become inclosed in the body of the tree, as it augments in size, forming knots in the wood, which are themselves composed of layers of ligneous matter, cone within cone.

---

* See Vol. II. p. 123.

In like manner, a volcanic mountain, as we have seen, consists of a succession of conical masses enveloping others, while lateral cones, having a similar internal structure, often project, in the first instance, like branches from the surface of the main cone, and then becoming buried again, are hidden like the knots of a tree.

We can ascertain the age of an oak or pine, by counting the number of concentric rings of annual growth, seen in a transverse section near the base, so that we may know the date at which the seedling began to vegetate. The Baobab-tree of Senegal (*Adansonia digitata*) is supposed to exceed almost any other in longevity; Adanson inferred that one which he measured, and found to be thirty feet in diameter, had attained the age of 5150 years. Having made an incision to a certain depth, he first counted three hundred rings of annual growth, and observed what thickness the tree had gained in that period. The average rate of growth of younger trees, of the same species, was then ascertained, and the calculation made according to a supposed mean rate of increase. De Candolle considers it not improbable, that the celebrated Taxodium of Chapultepec, in Mexico (*Cupressus disticha*, Linn.), which is 117 feet in circumference, may be still more aged.*

It is, however, impossible, until more data are collected respecting the average intensity of the volcanic action, to make any thing like an approximation to the age of a cone like Etna; because, in this case, the successive envelopes of lava and scoriæ are not continuous, like the layers of wood in a tree, and afford us no definite measure of time. Each conical envelope is made up of a great number of distinct lava currents and showers of sand and scoriæ, differing in quantity, and which may have been accumulated in unequal periods of time. Yet we cannot fail to form the most exalted conception of the antiquity of this mountain, when we consider that its base is about ninety miles in circumference; so that it would require ninety flows of lava, each a mile in breadth at their termination, to raise the present foot of the volcano as much as the average height of one lava current.

---

* On the Longevity of Trees, Bibliot. Univ., May, 1831.

There are no records within the historical era which lead to the opinion, that the altitude of Etna has materially varied within the last two thousand years. Of the eighty most conspicuous minor cones which adorn its flanks, only one of the largest, Monti Rossi, has been produced within the times of authentic history. Even this hill, thrown up in the year 1669, although 450 feet in height, only ranks as a cone of second magnitude. Monte Minardo, near Bronte, rises, even now, to the height of 750 feet, although its base has been elevated by more modern lavas and ejections. The dimensions of these larger cones appear to bear testimony to *paroxysms* of volcanic activity, after which we may conclude, from analogy, that the fires of Etna remained dormant for many years — since nearly a century of rest has sometimes followed a violent eruption in the historical era. It must also be remembered, that of the small number of eruptions which occur in a century, one only is estimated to issue from the summit of Etna for every two that proceed from the sides. Nor do all the lateral eruptions give rise to such cones as would be reckoned amongst the smallest of the eighty hills above enumerated; some of them produce merely insignificant monticules, which are soon afterwards buried by showers of ashes.

How many years then must we not suppose to have been expended in the formation of the eighty cones? It is difficult to imagine that a fourth part of them have originated during the last thirty centuries. But if we conjecture the whole of them to have been formed in twelve thousand years, how inconsiderable an era would this portion of time constitute in the history of the volcano! If we could strip off from Etna all the lateral monticules now visible, together with the lavas and scoriæ that have been poured out from them, and from the highest crater, during the period of their growth, the diminution of the entire mass would be extremely slight! Etna might lose, perhaps, several miles in diameter at its base, and some hundreds of feet in elevation; but it would still be the loftiest of Sicilian mountains, studded with other cones, which would be recalled, as it were, into existence by the removal of the rocks under which they are now buried.

There seems nothing in the deep sections of the Val del Bove to indicate that the lava currents of remote periods were greater in volume than those of modern times; and there are abundant proofs that the countless beds of solid rock and scoriæ were accumulated, as now, in succession. On the grounds, therefore, already explained, we must infer that a mass, eight thousand or nine thousand feet in thickness, must have required an immense series of ages anterior to our historical periods, for its growth; yet the whole must be regarded as the product of a modern portion of the Newer Pliocene epoch. Such, at least, is the conclusion that seems to follow from the geological data already detailed, which show that the oldest parts of the mountain, if not of posterior date to the marine strata around its base, were at least of coeval origin.

*Whether signs of Diluvial Waves are observable on Etna.* — Some geologists contend, that the sudden elevation of large continents from beneath the waters of the sea have again and again produced waves which have swept over vast regions of the earth, and left enormous rolled blocks strewed upon the surface.* That there are signs of local floods of extreme violence, on various parts of the surface of the dry land, is incontrovertible, and I have endeavoured to point out causes which must for ever continue to give rise to such phenomena; but such appearances afford no geological proof of a general cataclysm. It is clear that no devastating wave has passed over the forest zone of Etna, since any of the lateral cones before mentioned were thrown up; for none of these heaps of loose sand and scoriæ could have resisted for a moment the denuding action of a violent flood.

To some, perhaps, it may appear that hills of such incoherent materials cannot be of very great antiquity, because the mere action of the atmosphere must, in the course of several thousand years, have obliterated their original forms. But there is no weight in this objection; for the older hills are covered with trees and herbage, which protect them from waste; and in regard to the newer ones, such is the porosity of their component materials, that the rain which falls upon them is instantly absorbed, and, for the same reason that the rivers on Etna have a subterranean course, there are none descending the sides of the minor cones.

---

* Sedgwick, Anniv. Address to the Geol. Soc., p. 35. Feb. 1831.

No sensible alteration has been observed in the form of these cones since the earliest periods of which there are memorials; and there seems no reason for anticipating that in the course of the next ten thousand or twenty thousand years they will undergo any great alteration in their appearance, unless they should be shattered by earthquakes or covered by volcanic ejections.

I shall hereafter point out, that in other parts of Europe, similar loose cones of scoriæ, probably of higher antiquity than the whole mass of Etna, stand uninjured, at inferior elevations above the level of the sea.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

London:
Printed by A. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
2-month loans may be renewed by calling (510) 642-6753
1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books to NRLF
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

JAN 01 1996

JUN 19 1996

YB 29854

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES

C006144229